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DOG'S LIFE

by the same Author
JOHN BROWN'S BODY

GORDON BOSHELL

DOG'S LIFE

A SATIRICAL NOVEL

SECKER & WARBURG

1945

Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.
7 John Street, Bloomsbury, W.C.1

AUTHOR OWNS UP

The characters in this book—with the exception of The Dog—are not only fictitious but, in some cases, fantastic. All the same, no reverence for any living person is intended—and this goes for Dog Lovers in particular.

G.B.

First published 1945

*This book is produced in
complete conformity with the
authorized economy standards*

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SAMUEL PERKINS collected six months' money from the cashier of the *Daily Monitor* and walked out into Fleet Street. He had been fired.

Had you stopped any five passers-by and said, "Look . . . that's Samuel Perkins," it is a safe bet that all of them would have answered, "So what?" Yet three out of those five—and I have the authority of the Institute of Public Opinion for this—would be avid readers of his daily column.

Almost everybody knows that widely-read gossip feature which appears in the *Daily Monitor* over the name of John Greatheart . . . but you must now learn that there is no such person.

Samuel Perkins was the sixth John Greatheart to rise to the dizzy heights of £2,000 a year. He was also the sixth John Greatheart, within the space of four years, to walk from the office into Fleet Street with six months' money in his pocket and no job.

To-morrow, at breakfast-tables throughout Great Britain, in trains and on buses, eager men and women would open their *Daily Monitor* (certified net sale, three million, excluding voucher copies and returns) . . . they would open their *Monitor* after a cursory glance at the 72-point headlines on Page One, and inside they would find the ever-entertaining gossip column signed "John Greatheart."

It would be as boldly displayed as ever, as bright and entertaining and informative as ever and—it would have been written by John Greatheart the Seventh. But the public would not know that, and the *Daily Monitor* would never tell them. Why should it?

Samuel Perkins stood for a moment irresolutely on the pavement. He looked to the east towards the dome of St. Paul's and thought of the paragraphs it had given him . . . when the time-bomb was unearthed, and when an incautious reference to the number of pigeons roosting there had started a correspondence that ran for months.

He looked across the road at the brown shell of St. Bride's and the still-white spire. It had made him two hundred pounds, if a penny.

From the west came the strident chime of the clock outside St. Dunstan's, strident as the confident voice of his late employer,

Lord Flushwater. The clock chimed: Lord Flushwater . . . the sack . . . Lord Flushwater . . . the sack . . . Lord Flush . . .

Now about Samuel Perkins' dismissal a little explanation is necessary. Although England is the birthplace and the home of newspapers Lord Flushwater had always held it to be essential that his staff should slake their thirst for new ideas at wells further westward. Hence the fact that there was always a scramble for *Time* magazine in the offices of the *Daily Monitor* and hence the fact that the columns of the *Monitor* became a never-failing fount of novelty to the English public and the rest of Fleet Street.

Nowhere in the paper was the effect more noticeable than in the gossip column, since the successive John Greathearts were the only people in the office with time to read anything other than their own papers and those of their rivals. Almost overnight a new language and a new style was created by John Greatheart the First—to be expanded and elaborated by his successors.

It was largely to their efforts that the growth of the *Monitor* is attributed by Doktor Funke in his penetrating study of English newspaper circulations (*Zeitungenlebensraum*, chap. v, pp. 1203–7).

"Never before", he says, "has the attraction of a new style of writing been so well exploited. Its success rests on the observance of three simple rules: (1) nothing must ever be said in a straightforward way, (2) everything must be coloured by a copious use of adjectives, and (3) the invention of new words, or an unusual combination of old ones, to give the public the daily thrill of a new competition in discovering the meaning, is essential."

The following examples from the *Daily Monitor* are appended:

Observance of Rule 1: "To Berlin, tree-lined capital of the Third Reich, came yesterday thin, stoop-shouldered moneywizard Doktor Schacht."

Observance of Rule 2: "Podgy, snub-nosed, bull-necked, cigar-puffing British Premier Winston Spencer Churchill . . ."

Observance of Rule 3: "Said Italian(h)ate Mayor Laguardia . . ."
"All the wise Monitorialise." "Infanticipating."

It was due to a too-hasty use of that delightful portmanteau-word by which Mr. Winchell describes approaching motherhood that Samuel Perkins, John Greatheart the Sixth, was fired.

He had heard, on the authority of Miss Kitty McCann's Press

agent, that the actress was "retiring" for a time to her cottage in the country. On asking the obvious question, the Press agent hedged, saying Miss McCann had told him not to talk about it.

Mr. Perkins, realizing that there was no better method of getting a Press agent to gossip than telling him to keep his mouth shut, promptly put two and two together and inserted a snappy paragraph in his column . . .

"Protem loss to westend revuers is blonde,
svelte fandansister Kitty McCann:
countrycottagised, infanticipating."

Now, Miss Kitty McCann was married . . . the paragraph was harmless enough in that respect. Unfortunately, however, she had retired to the country merely to get over an attack of eczema. Unfortunately, too, her husband was head of a company which Lord Flushwater was at that time trying to buy.

The arrival of fifty different samples of baby-food from various manufacturers led Miss McCann, in her country seclusion, to the instant belief that someone was (to use her own simple phraseology) "trying to take a rise out on her".

Suspecting all her best friends, she wrote to them accusingly and at once—only to receive from each one of them a copy of the *Daily Monitor* with Mr. Perkins' paragraph heavily ringed in pencil.

The arrival at this moment of a letter from Christmas Zipp, the astute editor of the *Monitor*, offering her "fifty guineas (£52 10s.) for a 500-word article to be entitled 'I Won't Put My Baby on the Stage . . . Says Actress-Mother' or alternatively, 'I'm Going to Make My Baby a Star, Too . . . Says West End Actress'" sent Miss McCann clean off the handle.

There were telephone calls and more telephone calls, and talk of solicitors and writs. "Leave it to me," said her husband, somewhat pompously, "old Flushwater's a pal o' mine. I'll talk to him."

And so the matter came under the eye of Lord Flushwater himself.

* * *

It was a sunny morning in November. The podgy peer (your pardon, Mr. Perkins) was taking his morning stroll—limited by his

own iron will and self-discipline to fifteen minutes—in the garden of his country mansion. In these minutes he made more money than Mr. Perkins could make in a year of assiduous paragraph-hunting. In these fifteen minutes he spoke to Cabinet Ministers, bought and sold shares and inaugurated *Monitor* campaigns against people and policies he didn't like and in favour of those he did.

Beyond the pergolas and the flower-beds unrolled the lush and kindly Weald of Kent. There wasn't a newspaper office to be seen, and in that expanse of peaceful countryside the penetrating eye of His Lordship seldom rested on a single member of that vast conglomeration of people to whom he so often referred as The British Public—or, personifying them in moments of sentimental regard, "The Little Feller".

What a benefactor was Lord Flushwater! Daily he told the Little Feller how to get the things he wanted . . . and the amazing thing was that not one of these rosy futures interfered with Lord Flushwater's private existence or interests in the least.

Lord Flushwater believed in freedom for everybody—freedom to develop their initiative, freedom of enterprise. And he believed in it belligerently.

In the execution of that admirable policy his paper poured out money to extinguish its competitors. It flooded the country with mangles, carpet-sweepers, free encyclopædias . . . so that its circulation should rise and that of its competitors fall. In other words, so that the *Daily Monitor* should stay in business and its competitors go out of business. And who shall call him dishonest? The others would have done the same to him. If they could.

Lord Flushwater did not want the Little Feller in the Little Shop Around the Corner ("always put initial caps," said the *Daily Monitor* style-sheet) to be forced out of business. He loved to tell the stories of Little Fellers who by their enterprise and initiative—which meant increasing the size of their businesses by buying out or forcing out other Little Fellers—had become Big Fellers.

But he campaigned vigorously and for years against the co-operative movement, which was an organization of Little Fellers running their own stores for themselves and sharing the profits. These were Little Fellers indeed, because individually they hadn't even enough money to start a Little Shop Around the Corner. But by pooling their resources—as Lord Flushwater and his business

associates would do if they wanted to gain control of an organization—they built up a successful business.

The truth was that Lord Flushwater worshipped the Little Feller—so long as he stayed little. Or, if he was to grow big, he mustn't do so in competition with anything in which Lord Flushwater had an interest.

So he campaigned for littleness . . . littleness was a virtue, littleness of pocket, littleness of mind, of interest, of outlook.

And he campaigned boldly. He braved being found out—and he wasn't. He went before his public almost daily with a picture of the Little Feller he wanted it to be and said bluntly—"This is you—believe it". A highly paid cartoonist put this conception into black-and-white.

The Little Feller (the reader) was depicted as a tiny figure with a silly bowler-hat and a decrepit umbrella. The Little Feller (the reader) had blank eyes and wore spectacles. He had a weeping "walrus" moustache which lifted to show a mouthful of teeth when he smiled foolishly. When surprised he went into a cataleptic rigor and fell backward. His Little Missis was a fat, featureless, hazy background to his life, who asked him questions in order that he might give the replies which Lord Flushwater wanted him to give.

The Little Feller existed to be the mouthpiece of Lord Flushwater and Lord Flushwater blandly told the public that he was the public personified. In this way he assured himself of public support for anything he wanted done. If Lord Flushwater didn't want a horsepower tax on cars, then the Little Feller didn't want it either. If Lord Flushwater was in need of more advertising revenue round about October, then the Little Feller cried loudly that there were only 85 Shopping Days to Christmas and he was shown leaving various shops with the pick of the stock.

The editorial columns, which campaigned gallantly for the free and unfettered Press of Britain to say what Lord Flushwater wanted to say, were also used to ensure that the Little Feller should have what Lord Flushwater had decided it would be good for him to have, or should give up what His Lordship had decided he should give up.

This explained why obscure by-election campaigns found their way into the columns of the *Daily Monitor* at unusual length. The men and women of Manchester would awake one morning to find that their freedom was being imperilled in a by-election at Barking.

If Lord Flushwater's candidate won they found that the result was a triumph for common sense and their wisdom was extolled. If he lost, there were two courses which Lord Flushwater could adopt. One way was to give the result in a single paragraph down the page, on the assumption that the Little Feller can't remember what you said yesterday and cares less. The other was to cry shame on public apathy at election-time.

Lord Flushwater was not averse to adopting the second method when badly balked. The Little Feller was his child . . . and children need chastising at times.

It was in such a chastising frame of mind that His Lordship strode down his garden path on that sunny morning shortly after Mr. Perkins's paragraph had appeared. Already the telephone had been active, and the price which Miss McCann's husband wanted for his shares in the business Lord Flushwater was seeking to buy was in danger of going up unless Kitty McCann were appeased.

His Lordship paused by a bust of Napoleon. He opened a little door in the pedestal and pulled out a telephone.

—Office! he barked. His secretary darted forward, took the phone and replaced it after a hasty word with the operator.

Lord Flushwater paced on. He knew exactly how long it would take his private exchange to get through to the editor of the *Daily Monitor*. There were two branch exchanges to go through, and the private branch exchange of the *Monitor*. Fifteen paces . . .

Lord Flushwater reached the bust of Nelson just as the phone, hidden inside the hinged head, began to ring. His secretary handed it to him.

—Thachu, Zipp? And, swifter than echo, the answer:—Yes, Chief.

His Lordship liked to be called Chief. It was the title by which the late Lord Northcliffe used to be known . . . and wasn't the circulation of the *Monitor* greater than anything Northcliffe ever achieved? But this morning the implied praise had no effect.

—Who wrote that paragraph about Kitty McCann? Thus his Lordship, ominous-voiced. To whom Zipp, prepared as ever—Perkins, Chief.

—Never heard of him. Fire him. Get somebody else. Get John Steinbeck. Get Bernard Shaw . . . somebody with a Name.

—Yes, Chief. Anything else, Chief . . . ?

—No . . . yes. Waitaminit. . .

His Lordship reached out a hand. His secretary handed him ~~that~~ morning's *Daily Monitor*, folded at the middle page, with one of the stories marked in blue-pencil.

—Good story about that kid who couldn't go to school because her folks hadn't any kewpons to buy her a pair o' shoes. . . . Who put the headline on it?

—You mean "*All God's Chillun Got Shoes—Except Molly Haythornthwaite*"? That one?

—Sure. . . .

—Wilkinson, Chief.

—Never heard of him. What do we pay him? Eh?

—Sixteen pounds.

—Chicken feed, Zipp! Double it . . . he's got the right idea. Religion, that's what the public like. And Zipp . . . listen. About that colyume—couldn't you get the Archbishop of Canterbury to do it now and again? We'd get somebody to ghost for him. Change the title line . . . you know, the type. Put it in prayer-book type, Old English stuff. Classy. Eh?

—We'll try, Chief. Don't think we'll have much luck. . . .

—What? Nonsense! Tell him we'll go to three thousand. Get right on to him.

His Lordship paused. Then: Zipp . . . ! No, don't talk. Listen. What's the hope o' this world? I'll tell you. Religion. Make a note of it, Zipp. Don't forget it. Religion's gotta *future*.

Lord Flushwater put down the receiver and his secretary replaced the phone.

His Lordship stood a moment in thought. Then he lifted his head and gazed, clear-eyed and challengingly, upon the Weald of Kent.

But if it answered him he never heard it.

* * *

Samuel Perkins stood on the pavement in Fleet Street and reviewed the situation—and it didn't take much reviewing. He was fired. Right, He had a cheque for one thousand pounds in his

pocket. Good. He was thirty-five and he was single. And, ah, yes . . . he was thirsty.

He went across the road, rounded the Press Association building into Salisbury Square, and turned into the Press Club, where the archaic sign of crossed quills over an inkwell greets the visitor, went up the staircase, lined with cartoons of famous journalistic figures of the past, and into the bar.

There were four of his friends there. He came straight to the point:

—Give these twerps a drink, Harry. It's on me. I've just been fired.

—And a club Scotch for you, sir?

—How did you know!

Samuel Perkins expected some signs of surprise from his friends. Instead:—Make it clubs all round, said Murgatroyd. The b——'s got a cheque for a thousand quid in his pocket. Said Williams—*And he's joining the News-Chronicle to-morrow!*

—The *Mirror*, you mean, chimed in Johnson.

—It's the first I've heard of a job, Samuel asserted. Anyhow, who told you I'd been fired? Webster looked at him in mock astonishment.—Some bloody newshawk you are! It's all over the Street.

—Heard it last night in the Old Bell, said Williams . . . and Murgie here picked it up in Poppins'. You foisted a baby on Kitty McCann and her old man rang up the Chief. What about the new job?

—There isn't one. I'm going to retire to the country for six months and write a book. .

—That's the four hundred and fifty-sixth novel that a reporter has threatened to write, chipped in Murgatroyd, and I've never known one to do it.

—Thank God. Johnson looked at his glass. Same again, Harry.

—Sorry, sir . . . you can't have the same again.

—Christ, that old gag! "Similar," then . . .

—I'm paying, said Samuel, and don't argue. He felt affluent. Indeed he was, for he always lived up to his income and here he was, with his income six months ahead of him.

He felt remote from his friends and somewhat superior . . . a

strange sense of freedom. They had to go into the office soon for an eight-hour spell. The rest of the day was his—to do as he liked with. And the next day . . . and the next, and so on. Until the money ran low. . . .

—It was the *Morning Sun*, Williams was saying. They got in a picture of a prize Argentine bull. It had just been sold for thousands of quids. But it seems the Old Man's wife is keen about their blessed Cleaner Journalism campaign. So she takes one dekkko at this picture, gives a kind of scream and orders the artists to paint out the bull's what-d'you-call-'ems. Mustn't let sex rear its ugly head at the breakfast-table. . . .

(Cries of *Go on! . . . Aw, lay off!*)

—It's a fact . . . they made the old bull into a eunuch before they printed it. Then the fun began . . . the owner bunged a red-hot writ in right away. He said they were ruining his business in stud-fees—what cow would look at a husband like that?

—Trouble was, they daren't let it go to court because they'd have had to print a report of the proceedings and that would have put the Clean Journalism campaign completely in the can. So they paid up. Cost 'em a packet, I believe.

—If only proprietors and their friends and relations would keep out of the business we might get some decent newspapers, said Samuel, with feeling. Dam' it, I wouldn't even mind 'em having the profits. . . .

—That's handsome of you, said Williams. Same again, Harry. All right, "similar" then . . .

* * *

Mr. Perkins left the club, mellow and at peace with the world. To-morrow . . . but to-morrow was a long way off. He stood on the pavement, looked up at the sun, then down at the busy traffic of the Street.

A nondescript and dirty little terrier left the aroma of a nearby bus-stop to come over and sniff at the turn-ups of his trousers.

—Ch'k, ch'k, said Mr. Perkins, kindly. Howya, Towzer? The little dog looked up, wagged its stump of a tail and looked around.

It found a ball of paper in the gutter, brought it to Samuel Perkins' feet, retreated a little and barked invitingly.

—Fetch it, then, said Samuel. He kicked the paper into the road and watched benevolently as the terrier darted after it.

And then he saw the bus.

It swung out sharply from behind a stationary taxi-cab. The little dog, busily worrying the paper, heard it a fraction of a second too late. It gave a sharp yelp—and began to run the wrong way.

Samuel Perkins did not think. He just acted. He leaped from the pavement. There was a squeal of brakes. The bus swerved to avoid the dog. The driver saw Samuel and tried to swerve back. It was too late.

Something red and terrible towered above Mr. Perkins. A big face glared, grimacing through a panel of glass. He heard a scream. He felt a blow, but no pain. He was falling, his arm outstretched . . . reaching for the dog. It was cowering, almost dead from fear. He saw his hand touch it.

He had a momentary sensation, as if all his strength were running out of his fingers, then a weird sense of motion. He was being carried through a forest at breakneck speed. How he avoided the trees he did not know. Somewhere behind him was Terror, something unnameable but horrible. Run . . . anywhere . . . quicker . . . quicker . . . get out of this! Run . . . keep on . . . faster . . . faster . . . !

* * *

The strictest rules of anonymity are broken in the cause of news—and good headlines. Next morning the *Daily Monitor* carried the story:

GREATHEART
THE GREAT
OF HEART

Monitor Man Gives
Life for a Dog

Samuel Perkins had got on the front page for the first time.

* * *

—Why did you do it? The Archangel Gabriel tugged his whiskers irritably and frowned on Death junior.

—Father said it was an easy job, so he let me handle it.

—Well, he shouldn't have, grumbled the Archangel. See what a mess you've made of it!

—It wasn't my fault—honest, it wasn't. It was such a tough soul. It jumped out of my hand into the dog.

—You shouldn't try to do two things at once. If you'd let go of the dog's soul you'd have been able to hold the man's.

—Well, I *did* kill him. . . . I got my diploma for handling bus accidents. Death junior was becoming irritated.

—A man's not legally dead until you've delivered his soul here, to me, and got a receipt for it. You merely made his body untenable, that's all you did.

—But it was a beautiful job, Grandpa, really. If you'd heard him scrunching up. . . .

—Don't let's go into that. The question is: How to balance the books. A fine muddle they're in now! We were due to have a Perkins delivered this morning. Now we're a dog too many and a Perkins short.

Death junior pondered a minute, then his face brightened.

—Suppose I go now and do the dog? I mean . . . well, you know what I mean. A bit of poisoned meat or something. Eh? How's about it? Put the job down to overtime?

Gabriel shook his head.

—It's against the regulations. That dog had a few more years to live. That's the whole trouble. We're not supposed to take spirits in advance.

—Well, the dog *is* living, isn't it? Even if its body has got Perkins' soul.

—So what? We ought to have the Perkins soul here.

—Well, said Death junior, cheerfully, it's simple enough to wangle things. Where's the Perkins delivery form? Oh, here it is . . . well, just write in *Delivery delayed owing to war conditions*. I'll collect it when the normal term expires. See?

—Um. I suppose that's all we can do. . . . All right. They may not notice one too many but they're certain to spot it if we're one short.

—Aw, it'll be right. You worry too much, Grandpa.

—That'll do, growled Gabriel. Any more of your lip and I'll have you put on the reception desk in the Methodist section—that'll keep you out of mischief. Get out!

* * *

The terror which had seized the soul of Samuel Perkins as he fell beneath the wheels of the London bus sent his new body scurrying madly through the accident-loving crowds in Fleet Street, through the vast forest of legs and umbrellas and walking-sticks, beneath the arms that gesticulated like branches in the wind.

Mr. Perkins sought a hiding-place and the instinct of his new terrier-brain led him to one. He swung left out of Ludgate Circus, yelped his way up Farringdon Street, turned right, panting, dodging the hooves of startled cart-horses outside Smithfield Market, and finally sank down under the wall of an air-raid shelter in Charterhouse Square. And there, from sheer exhaustion, he fell asleep.

The chillness of the morning air awoke him. His eyes focused slowly. There was a strange blur and a black blob in front of them, but beyond . . . a field of tall grass!

Mr. Perkins thought aloud: I'm tight!

Yap, yap.

Mr. Perkins jumped. A dog! This was a nightmare.

He reached out a hand to feel if he was in bed. No: he was lying among grass—wet grass. He tried to rub his eyes. Instead of a hand something wet and rubbery passed across them . . . down his nose . . . but his nose wasn't so long, surely! Yet he could feel the sensation of touch coming to him from an apparently immense distance in front of his face.

He shook his head and blinked. Then he looked down. The grass tickled his nose and there, in the grass, only a few inches away, were two legs. Dog's legs.

There is a time, just before the news of a tragedy is about to be broken, when what is to be known is *felt*. The soul of Mr. Perkins was struggling with the unaccustomed machinery of his brain. He stood up slowly, shivering with fear. Then the message came through.

—God damn it! yapped Mr. Perkins, in agony, I'm a man . . . I'm a man. They can't do this to me. . . . Lemme out of here. . . .

Two workmen stopped by the railings.

—Look at that bloody dog, Bert. Running round in circles chasin' his tail. Cor, look at 'im!

The sound of a human voice fell like music on Mr. Perkins' ears. Instinctively one of them uncurled and rose rigidly. He rushed to the railings and began prancing up and down on his hind legs.

—I'm a man, barked Mr. Perkins. This is all wrong. It's an accident. Get me out . . . take me somewhere. . . .

The next moment a large hand gripped his muzzle, while another forced open his lower jaw.

—Nice set o' teeth, ain't he? Reckon 'e's about a year old. With this, Mr. Perkins' jaw was released. He received a good-natured smack on the head which made him blink.

—Attaboy! Sick 'em! Cats . . . miaouw . . . sick 'em, lad.

Baffled fury sent Mr. Perkins's voice up almost to a scream.

—Damn you, you fools, he yelped, I'm a man. . . . I'm a man . . . can't you see?

The excitement sent him running round again in tiny circles.

—Look at 'im, chasing 'is tail agen. Wonder why they do it?

—I dunno. Reckon 'e's got worms. Come on, we're late already.

They moved off . . . and Mr. Perkins flopped on the wet grass and wept, with little snuffling sobs and whimpers. Suddenly he stopped. Mr. Perkins' soul was working bravely, trying to get a thought through to him. Mr. Perkins cocked his head on one side, thinking . . . yes, that was it—he was a dog all right, but he understood human speech. But . . . he began to snuffle again . . . what earthly use was it, since he couldn't talk back? Mr. Perkins stood up, shakily.

A sudden spasm of cold shot through him. He jumped violently and swung round.

—That's no way to acknowledge a friendly greeting, barked the dachshund in a pleasant tenor.

It didn't seem in the least strange to Mr. Perkins that he should understand.

—You a stranger round these parts? added the dachshund.—Yes, said Mr. Perkins.

—Doing anything?

—N-no . . . not at the moment.

—You look peckish. Been sleeping out, eh! Silly, barked the dachshund, reprovingly. Ought to get a home. 'Course, *you* may find it difficult. . . .

—Yap?

—You belong here, explained the dachshund. If you were a refugee, it'd be easier. They've got a soft spot for refugees, the British. Hotels are full of 'em. Very keen on our breed, too. Ever since the war we've been awful popular: no difficulty getting a cosy home at all. Everybody wants a dachshund.

—Indeed?

—Yes—we keep up civilian morale. They call us after German leaders. When they can say "Hitler . . . fetch my slippers. Good dog," it makes 'em feel happy. I've a pal called Goebbels, one called Rommel, and another Ribbentrop.

—What's your name?

—I lived with a fellow who was called up, said the dachshund, so they had to turn me out. . . . He used to call me Bobs, the Big Dog knows why! But now I've got a new home. They thought it'd be lovely to have a dachshund. They call me Hermann.

Mr. Perkins began to yawn. From sheer force of habit he lifted a paw to his mouth—and fell over.

Hermann looked on interestedly.—I've seen humans do that. 'Course, it's easy for them, having two legs off the ground. But it's silly, all the same. . . . At least, I think so.

—Why? said Mr. Perkins.

—Well, it doesn't stop you yawning, does it?

—No, said Mr. Perkins, but it's polite.

—I don't see it. If you've got good teeth and a clean tongue there's nothing to be ashamed of.

—But it makes others think you're bored with their company.

—It doesn't make you any less bored if you put your paw over your mouth.

—No . . . but then they don't see you yawning.

—I still don't see it, said the dachshund. If they believe it's right to put their paw over their mouth when they yawn, then they know you're yawning if you put *your* paw over *your* mouth . . . if you get me. So what's the point?

—Well, it shows you don't want them to think that you're bored.

—Listen, barked Hermann, would you like to be a bore? Of course you wouldn't. Well then, if you were boring me, wouldn't I be doing you a good turn if I yawned and showed you what an ass you were making of yourself? You're very immature, you know. Almost human.

—I am human, barked Mr. Perkins, involuntarily. Hermann looked at him.

—That's a silly sort of crack, he said disapprovingly. What dog in his senses wants to be thought as silly as they are? However, you're young. You'll grow out of it. Come and have a bone.

—Good heavens! Mr. Perkins's human reasoning said to him, you can't eat a filthy bone that a dog has been gnawing! But his terrier instinct whispered invitingly: Bone! Bone. . . . Lovely bone. Oh, joy! Oh, bliss!

—You're a pal! Lead me to it, barked Mr. Perkins, before he knew he had spoken. Hermann waddled ahead to a clump of decaying iris roots.

—It should be under here, he said, if that blessed Annette hasn't smelled it out. Eh? Who's Annette? She's a poodle. *Verdammt Französische!* There's a woman, if you like!

—You mean bitch, don't you? said Mr. Perkins, judging by his friend's tone of bark.

—“Bitch” is too good for her, snarled Hermann. Hang on a minute though. . . . I think it's about here. I buried it pretty deep.

At this moment Mr. Perkins felt an urge.

—Will you excuse me a minute, Hermann? he said. I . . . I . . . want to go behind this tree.

Hermann looked up, blew some soil out of his nose and yapped: There's a sunflower stalk here. Won't that do? Why, what's the matter? . . . I do believe . . . well! I

He sat back on his haunches and regarded Mr. Perkins long and thoughtfully. Mr. Perkins shivered slightly.

—You're hardly out of the puppy stage, Hermann said at last, but puppies don't mind when or where. Older dogs know the law about the intersection of horizontals and verticals. But you . . . I know what it is! You've been corrupted by human intercourse. This is some more of that darned “politeness” business.

—I'm sorry, said Mr. Perkins. There was nothing else to yap.

—That's all right. But I'll have to take you in paw. You're a likeable dog, for all your queer ideas. You string along with me and I'll show you the ropes. First thing is: learn to be natural. There's the sunflower stalk. Go to it.

Mr. Perkins did as he was told. Hermann went on with his digging, pausing now and then to bark an observation. His voice came up from the deepening hole while Mr. Perkins, his eyes shut in shame, struggled to combine swiftness with stability.

—Humans . . . queer creatures . . . never honest with themselves . . . make a show of hiding something everyone else can see . . . like scratching on a paving-stone. The man at the place where I live . . . he hates the one in the next kennel . . . but they grin at each other and drink leg-wobble together. If I don't like anybody, I bite 'em straight away. . . . If Annette's pinched this bone I'll have her ear off in the morning. Ah! Here it is. . . .

Hermann backed out of the hole and laid the bone in front of Mr. Perkins.

—Have a lick, old top, he barked. It'll put you off until we can get a real meal.

Mr. Perkins looked at the bone. Instinct won.

Hermann watched him—By the Big Dog! he said, you *must* be hungry. It's three weeks old, at least.

* * *

Mr. Perkins licked the bone again and again. Finally:—That'll do, barked Hermann. Leave it there and come along to my place. The humans had rabbit last night and they always leave the best pieces for me. Funny thing, that: they simply can't tackle bones, poor things.

—Shall we bury this again? asked Mr. Perkins.

—No, let's leave it out for Annette to find. She'll sniff round it and wonder whoever's been at it . . . and won't she worry when she can't smell me! She's sweet on me, he added with a grin.

—Are you going to marry her? barked Mr. Perkins, the journalistic side of him scenting romance.

—You mean have pups?

To which Mr. Perkins, primly: That's putting it crudely.

—It's putting it honestly. Anyway, there's nothing doing. We don't marry out of our class, you know . . . or do you?

—Humans do, said Mr. Perkins. Hermann snorted. They're daft, he growled.

—Love conquers all, said Mr. Perkins, sententiously. Love in a cottage can be as beautiful and lasting as love in a palace.

—That's rather high-flown barkage, said Hermann. If you mean all kennels have a roof, I agree. I could be just as happy in one room in Old Street as in a suite at the Dorchester—and I've been in both.

—Well, that's what I'm saying.

—It's not. I'm not talking about difference in circumstances, I'm talking about differences in mentality. That's what I mean by class differences. You don't know much about life. Don't you read your newspapers?

Mr. Perkins swallowed. Do dogs read newspapers? he said.

—Can't *you* read?

—Of course, said Mr. Perkins, proudly.

—Well, then. *I've* been fetching the *Daily Mail* from the news-agents to my kennel every morning for three years. And I sleep on *The Times*. You ought to read the advertisements! It seems you don't know, but the humans have big kennels full of unwanted pups . . . thousands of 'em. Now, I share a pleasant kennel with a man and a woman . . . no pups of their own. But they won't take one of their own breed from one of these places.

—Just a minute, said Mr. Perkins. You don't understand. It might turn out to be a bad type when it grew up. Suppose they gave it a good home—I mean, kennel—and it turned out to have criminal instincts?

—That makes my first point, said Hermann. They breed out of their class and then the pups aren't wanted.

—Here, wait a minute, barked Mr Perkins. You keep to your class—all right. But how many pups have you fathered?

—The Big Dog only knows, answered Hermann, but I should say . . . let's see . . . well, offhand, about a hundred and fifty.

—Well, what's happened to them? Do you know?

—They've all got a kennel over their heads . . . somewhere.

—How do you know?

—I know humans. That's pretty well what they exist for, thank the Big Dog. They say so themselves. Why, in peace-time nearly every newspaper runs a Dog Column. But it doesn't run a column about starving man-pups in China, does it?

—Well, no . . . but . . .

—If you were a man—which, thank the Big Dog, you're not . . . (Mr. Perkins winced but barked nothing) . . . If you were a man, yapped Hermann, warming to the argument, would you take a yellow man-pup into your kennel? Be honest . . . ! (Mr. Perkins growled uncomfortably.) But if somebody offered you a Pekinese puppy for nothing you'd jump at the chance. You don't seem to realize you're living in England. . . .

—It's a free country, said Mr. Perkins, habit sending the words to his tongue.

—It's a free country for us, said Hermann. People do a lot more for us than they do for their own pups.

—People starve themselves to feed their children.

—They starve themselves to feed dogs. And mark you, said Hermann, they didn't father the dogs. They've no reasonable responsibility towards us.

—But you don't show any responsibility towards your own pups. You just father them and forget about them. Now, said Mr. Perkins, wouldn't you like to settle down in a cosy house—I mean, kennel—with one woman . . . all right, "bitch" . . . and see your puppies growing up around you? Mr. Perkins grew lyrical. Wouldn't you love to guide them, nurse them through their puppy-ailments, and have them, big and strong, around you in your old age?

—Do men and women want to be together all the time? asked Hermann.

—If they've married for love, they do.

—You read the wrong columns in the newspapers, said Hermann. Why are women agitating so much about getting into what they call the professions? It only means they want to spend more time away from their kennels and that they don't like kennel duties.

Mr. Perkins hadn't thought about this. Well, he said, I suppose they want to satisfy their individuality. Besides, I expect most of them want to earn so they can give their puppies a better chance in life.

—Educate them better? queried Hermann. You mean sending them to training-kennels away from home?

—Public schools, corrected Mr. Perkins, sharply.

—I know their word for it. Now see where you've got with your argument. They don't want to live together all the time . . . and they want to send their children away. They've got some glimmerings of dog-sense at last. They want to express their own individuality. That's just our view. And we don't want to impose our mental outlook on our pups—or have them imposing theirs on us. The humans are just beginning to see the wisdom of it.

—But they do want their children with them. I'm sure of it, whined Mr. Perkins, sticking to the romantic outlook he'd been expressing in print for so long.

—Then why are they alway shouting to have the public-school system expanded? asked Hermann.

—Because they want the pups to have a better education.

—But they're always shouting for more municipal kennels—what they call crèches—too.

—Ah, said Mr. Perkins. That's so children can have proper care while their mothers go out to work.

—Indeed, barked Hermann. Do they like working more than looking after their pups in their own kennels?

—You don't understand, said Mr. Perkins. A lot of women have to go out working so that they can get enough money to feed their children. Eh? What's "money"? Well, said Mr. Perkins, seeing a chance to get control of the conversation, it's a means of exchange.

—Yap?

—Well, put it like this, said Mr. Perkins, feeling his way cautiously. I used to know a man who worked on the *Daily Monitor*. . . .

—I had some chips out of it once, said Hermann. But doesn't printers' ink spoil the vinegar!

Mr. Perkins ignored the interruption—Now this man earned a lot of money . . . two thousand pounds a year.

—Really? said Hermann, vaguely. How many bones is that?

—Oh, hundreds and hundreds. . . .

—But he had to do something to get this money before he could get the bones? Yes? H'm. Now, these women you're talking about, what would they get?

—Well, one might be a charwoman, say . . . I mean, said Mr. Perkins, forestalling the query, she'd go out in a morning to clean other people's kennels.

—Who cleaned hers? What, she did? Well then, said Hermann, why didn't the people whose kennels she cleaned, clean their own?

—They had money and she hadn't enough, said Mr. Perkins, floundering a little. Hermann began to fire questions at him.

—But they *could* have cleaned their own kennels? *Yes, but they didn't want to.* Did she want to clean their kennels? *I don't suppose so.* Did she like cleaning her own? *I don't know. Probably not.* Well, why did she clean other people's anyway? *She had to do it to get money.* You mean bones? *Yes, if you put it that way.* So they had more bones than they needed and she hadn't enough?

—Ye . . . es, said Mr. Perkins, limply. Hermann had not finished, however.

—But I've just read in the papers that they're going to make women clean other people's kennels after the war . . . even people who have a lot of bones. (*That's only fair*, said Mr. Perkins.) If someone with a lot of bones cleans the kennel of someone without any bones how can the one without any bones give any to the one with a lot?

Mr. Perkins pondered this a minute. The community . . . everybody else . . . will give them some, he said.

—But then they'll have more than ever. And the one without any bones will still not have any!

—If you put it that way. . . .

—How else can I put it? There's not even pup-sense in that, so far as I can see. Let's get this straight, said Hermann, in bewilderment. In order that someone who has plenty of bones can get some more, everybody who has some has to give up one or two. And the person who hasn't any still doesn't get any more. This money-business only seems to confuse the issue. Why don't they all work together to gather bones and then share 'em out so that everybody has enough?

—That would encourage laziness. A lot of people would stop working.

—I read the other day, said Hermann, still puzzled, about a human whose father left him five hundred thousand pounds. . . .

That would be "money", wouldn't it? It would? Well, will *he* work?

—He needn't, said Mr. Perkins, because he can exchange the money for all the bones he needs. And still have plenty over, he added. And once more he found the argument running away with him.

—But he can't eat them, said Hermann. So he's a glutton as well as being lazy? *He's a right to do what he likes with his own money.* Did he earn it? *No. His father earned it.* Then the bones it will buy belong to his father? *But his father's dead.* Then he doesn't need any bones. *But the son does.* Can't he work for them?

—You don't understand me, panted Mr. Perkins. He may put the money into industry, thus providing work for those who need it.

—Let's speak of bones, I can understand it better, barked Hermann. You mean he has so many bones that he'll give some to other people who haven't any?

—If they work for him, yes! Mr. Perkins, scenting another blitzkrieg, took a deep breath.

—Why should they work for him? *To get the bones.* Why couldn't he give them away? *He has to make a profit on his business.* What's a profit? *Well . . . if he paid six bones for having a thing made he'd exchange it for seven.* Who'd get the six bones? *The man who made it for him.* And he'd get seven? *That's right.* Then he'd have even more bones than he had at first. What would he do with them? *Start another business.* Why? *You must keep money—I mean, bones—moving round.* But they all seem to be moving one way, said Hermann. And look here . . . if he goes on doing that, sooner or later everybody will be working for one man to get their bones . . . and a dead man, too! Is that sense? *It's the way the money-system works.* Who made it? *We did—I mean, humans did.* Well, won't they alter it? *No.*

—I told you they were daft, said Hermann. Come on to my place and have some breakfast.

They trotted out of the square and down a side-street to a flat-fronted house. The door was open and at the end of the corridor Mr. Perkins could see a room where firelight was flickering on the walls.

—Now, listen, whispered Hermann. When we get to the door I'll whimper till they come. You cock one ear . . . the left one . . .

that's right, and look hungry . . . "appealing" they call it. When I pass you the wink, sit up and beg. You can beg, can't you?

—I don't like the idea of begging, said Mr. Perkins, distastefully.

—Don't be silly. Your precious humans do it . . . why, we had one called here last night. He said he had no food and nowhere to sleep, but they didn't ask him in and they didn't give him anything.

—I should think not, said Mr. Perkins indignantly, he'd probably only have spent it on drink.

—Well, the man here spends money on drink. Why shouldn't the other one?

—Because he can't afford it.

—Of course he can't if he hasn't any money!

—Anyhow, said Mr. Perkins, irritably, one shouldn't dispense charity indiscriminately. Your master . . .

—Servant, IF you please, growled Hermann, curling his lip menacingly and showing his teeth.

— . . . servant, I mean, said Mr. Perkins hastily. He's a right to know what the fellow's going to do with the money.

—Big Dog Almighty! Hermann looked at him in astonishment. Look here, what will *you* be doing at snore o'clock to-night?

—Snore what?

—Sleep-time—just after third bone-time.

—Oh . . . said Mr. Perkins, taking it in at last, I don't know. How could I? I might do any number of things. It just depends.

—Exactly, said Hermann. And if you don't know what you're going to do how can you tell what any other dog is going to do? That's a human argument. Silly.

Mr. Perkins hung his muzzle. Yes, he said, whimperingly, people are unkind to one another.

—That's better. You're showing some glimmerings of sense at last. They've very limited intelligence. They don't like being boneless and bedless so they don't think about it. And yet it's so easy to get their sympathy. I can twist 'em round my little claw! Now, take that beggar who called here last night. I'd show him how to get anything out of them.

—Really? said Mr. Perkins. How?

—I'd put him into strict training to make him more supple. His ears are too stiff, for one thing.

—Whatever do you mean?

—Well, if they were more supple he could learn to cock one. Just one, like this, said Hermann, suiting the action to the yap, and with the head on one side, like this. He needn't go hungry. That's a bone-winner any day of the week. But I'd teach him a better one than that. If he could only bend his back legs a bit and hang his forepaws in front of his chest and put his head back . . .

—Yes? said Mr. Perkins.

— . . it's a bone to a rubber-ball they'd put a piece of sugar on his nose. And if he threw it up and caught it in his mouth they'd be so pleased he'd eaten it that they'd give him almost anything.

—But it's degrading! said Mr. Perkins, aghast.

—I don't see that. It's a fair exchange, I think. It gives pleasure to their simple minds to see me do it—and they give me bones for it.

—But it wouldn't give them pleasure to see another human being do it, said Mr. Perkins.

Hermann looked at him.—Does it give them pleasure to turn him away without a bone, then? he asked.

As Mr. Perkins groped for a reply, there was a heavy clumping sound. He looked in the direction from which it came and instinctively his left ear rose up stiffly.

—That's the stuff, said Hermann. Hold it. He's coming. Hermann began to whimper as two huge black boots, under frayed trouser-ends, advanced across the tattered carpet. From high above Mr. Perkins there came a strange booming sound. . .

—Well, I'll be blowed . . . ! Hermann's brought a pal home!

Mr. Perkins looked up and saw a huge white, round object suspended above him. A strange gash in this hairless object opened and closed rapidly. Mr. Perkins put his head on one side and tried to focus. Yes, there were two little dots like eyes . . . but where was the nose? There wasn't a black spot anywhere. Then that red thing . . . ?

Good heavens . . . this must be a man! Mr. Perkins' jaw dropped, his little pink tongue slid out of one side of his muzzle and he panted from the shock.

—Isn't he cute! Here, Mary, come and look at this!

More clumping. Hermann's voice breathed in Mr. Perkins' ear: —That's grand, so far. Now . . . back on your haunches, lift your forepaws. Beg. Go on . . . quick. She loves it.

Instinct helped Mr. Perkins. He sat up, a little unsteadily—but he made it.

—Why, look, George! He's trying to beg. Oh, isn't he sweet! (Keep it up, whispered Hermann.) And look at Hermann! I do believe he wants to share his brekky with him! You know, George, I'm sure dogs have human feelings, aren't you?

—That's good for an extra bone, said Hermann.

But the strain was beginning to tell on Mr. Perkins. After all, this was the first time he'd tried to beg. He wobbled . . . waved his forepaws helplessly in the air and fell over. As he did so he heard an admiring whisper from Hermann: That's a winner, pup. The best trick of the lot!

Hunger and mortification were too much for Mr. Perkins, however. He lay on the floor and began to whimper.

—Oh, George, and he did try so hard! Well, he shall have a nice big bone. Poor, starved little thing!

—He's probably a stray, said George.

—Oh, how could they do it! I think people who turn their dogs adrift should be whipped. I do, honestly. . . .

Hermann barked sharply.

—All right, Hermie, love, did they keep him waiting for his brekky, den? Mumsie will get it right away. . . .

More clumping . . . then down from the sky came two vast plates of cold boiled rabbit. Manna! Hermann and Mr. Perkins set to, and within a minute Mr. Perkins found himself chasing the last tiny bone round and round the plate with the tip of his tongue. Hermann obligingly knocked it on to the carpet for him.

—Thanks, said Mr. Perkins, crunching it up with relish. That was grand. Hermann smiled: Don't mention it. Come in by the fire a minute . . . let it digest.

—D'you think they'll let me?

—What have *they* got to do with it? *I'm* asking you. Come on.

Mr. Perkins found it hard to accept this point of view but he pattered delicately behind Hermann, keeping a wary eye on the big pair of boots which rested in front of an arm-chair.

He needn't have bothered. He and Hermann made their way unmolested to a thick black hearth-rug and sat down, blinking at the fire. Mr. Perkins licked his chops. Hermann yawned. Then he rolled over slowly on his back and waved his legs in the air.

Mr. Perkins followed suit. And from the sky again came pleasure.

Five large white things hovered over both of them for a moment, descended, and began to move gently over their distended stomachs. It was a delightful sensation. Mr. Perkins' lips parted in pleasure. From a great distance he heard a voice. . . .

—Oh, look at him, George! The darling! He's positively smiling.

Mr. Perkins half opened a drowsy eye. He looked at the fingers . . . the wrist . . . and followed up the arm until he saw a face.

—By the Big Dog! he muttered under his bark, it's a woman!

But before the enormity of it could dawn upon him he was sound asleep.

* * *

Conversation on a Lower Plane:

—He's a mongrel, of course. . . .

—But they're terribly faithful. A friend of mine had one once . . . it would go for anyone who came near her. The trouble they had with the postman!

—I said to George, I said, "We can't turn him out, poor little thing . . ."

—I know. One hasn't the heart, has one?

—When I think about the people who must have had him it makes my blood boil. . . .

—I know, dear. I reported a man to the R.S.P.C.A. last week. Ill-treating a poor little dog absolutely unmercifully. I went up right away and pulled the stick out of his hand. "How would you like it," I said, "if I laid it across your shoulders, you brute?" "Well," he said, "it's just bitten my youngster. It's got to be taught a lesson."

—The swine! As if dogs knew any better. I bet the little brat had been tormenting it, too.

—I bet he had. Little demon!

—I don't know what's come over children nowadays. They're not half so well brought-up as they used to be.

—I know. I wouldn't have one in the house.

—Of course, he's only a mongrel. But he's *sweet*.

—It's the way they look at you. . . .

—I know. When they lay their head in your lap and just gaze up . . . so trusting. . . .

—Yes, and they're so absolutely dependent on us, too. I don't know how people can be so unfeeling as to . . .

—That's what I said to George. And he agreed absolutely. I said, "After all," I said, "what's another seven and sixpence? Only two nights' fire-watching money. And we can always spare a little meat, I think it's cruel the way some people keep their dogs short. If we can't share with those who give us so much pleasure and faithful service," I told George, "then I think we're inhuman, absolutely inhuman." That's what I said. And George agreed. Absolutely.

—They say horse-meat . . .

—My dear! I wouldn't give my dogs anything I wouldn't eat myself. Besides, I don't suppose they'd touch it.

—He *is* a sweet little thing. What are you going to call him?

—Snooks . . . Mister Snooks. I think it's cute. . . .

—Quite original, dear.

—Yes, George thinks so too. He took to him at once. "Do you know, Mary," he said yesterday, "I reckon Mr. Snooks knows every word we say to him." And I'm sure he's right. Absolutely.

—Just look at him curled up on the rug!

—Isn't he *sweet*! Watch now . . . I'll call him. Watch. Snookie! Snookums . . . Mumsie's calling you.

Mr. Perkins' peaceful slumber was broken. He looked up in some alarm and cocked an ear.

—Oh, my dear!

—What did I tell you? Never mind, Mr. Snooksie, darling . . . go back to sleepy-byes, now. Good boy.

—Oh, shut up, barked Mr. Perkins. You silly old woman! He laid his head down on the rug and grumbled into his paws.

—Isn't he *sweet*!

—Sometimes I'm sure he's talking to me in his own doggy language.

—I'm sure he is. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could teach them to speak?

—Yes, wouldn't it!

It was a popularity-hunting peer who coined the name "Mr. Snooks" to describe that poorer class of the great British public who are called upon to make every sacrifice both in war and in peace, and the faintly contemptuous appellation was widely publicized by the *Daily Monitor*.

The Little Feller had been given a name. It showed that Authority at last regarded him as something near-human. To this publicity Mr. Perkins had, in his earlier existence, contributed in a large degree. But it came as a shock to have the name applied to him. He grumbled heartily about it.

—Why worry? said Hermann, yawning and stretching himself on the hearthrug. You get upset by such little things. The two most important things in life are a kennel and a bone. You've got both. Have all these human Snookses got them? No. Well let *them* worry. Who'd d'you say called them Snookses?

—A peer.

—What's that?

Mr. Perkins fumbled for barks. Humans, he yapped at last, choose people from among themselves to say what they must do and not do.

—Half a bone-chew, said Hermann, looking up from nibbling his paw-nails, you mean to say it's like I might go to that Alsatian down the road and say, "I'll do whatever you bark". Is that it?

—Yes.

—*Katzenblut!* Still, he said judicially, they're hardly out of the puppy-stage yet, most of them. I suppose they choose the more intelligent ones—good, boneworthy humans that they know they can trust?

—Well, no; not exactly. People in Hull might choose a man from Penzance, even though they don't know him. Mr. Perkins saw a glint in Hermann's eye and braced himself. . . .

—How do they know he's any good? yapped Hermann. *The Party tells them.* What's a Party? *A lot of other people.* In Hull? *Some might be. But the executive—I mean the masters of the Party—might be in London.* How do they know what the people in Hull want? *You said yourself that only two things matter—kennels and bones.* Ah, they offer to get bones for them? *Yes.* And only people who are in this Party can get bones for other people? *Not exactly. There are several Parties.* Well, if one party offers to get bones for

people what do the other parties do? *They say they can get bigger ones.* Suppose there was a man in Hull who wasn't in a Party, said Hermann. Suppose he offered bigger bones and bigger kennels, too. Would they choose him? *They might not be allowed to.* Why? *Because he might not have any bones himself.* What's that got to do with it? *It's a law. Only a man who has bones can ask people to choose him.* But lots of people haven't bones. *It doesn't matter.* Even if he's the only man who knows what it's like to be without a bone, they still can't choose him? *No.* And he can't ask them to. Why? *It would be a frivolous candidature.*

—Well, I don't see anything funny about it, said Hermann. Anyhow, about this Peer. Is he Must-do-Man? *Yes.* Who chooses him? *No one. He's always a Must-do-Man.* Even if he doesn't offer people bones? *Yes.* Even if he tries to stop them having bones? *Yes.* Big Dog Almighty! Whatever for? *Because his father was.* Was? Is his father dead? *Yes.*

—We had an argument like this yesterday, barked Hermann. So far as I can make out, these humans work for dead men—meatless bones, and they're bossed about by dead men. I bark, suppose none of these three Party-things gets them any bones, what do they do?

—They choose some more men. . . .

—I should think so!

— . . . from the same Parties.

—Well, fill me with fleas! How long has this been going on?

—For years and years. It's the system.

—Haven't they ever howled about it?

—Oh, yes. For years and years.

Hermann sniffed.—It's just like my great-grand-dog told me, he said: "Barking men seldom bite."

He stretched and yawned, cocked an ear at Mr. Perkins and led the way to the door. Together they looked out into Charterhouse Square. The sun shone coldly and there was a nip in the air. Through the railings Mr. Perkins saw the ground was carpeted with red and yellow leaves. He lifted his head and yapped appreciatively.

Hermann grinned.—Grand, isn't it? he said. Wonderful to be out. Pity these poor humans . . . they spend all their time between one kennel and another. Never get any fresh air. Never have a decent run. Pouf! It's a man's life!

—You're right! said Mr. Perkins. He scratched his shoulder-blade with his hind paw. Even Lord Flushwater couldn't do that, he thought, proudly.

—Come on, let's have a romp, said Hermann.

They shot into the square, ploughed up the leaves in rustling clouds. Mr. Perkins was amazed how well he felt. He barked joyously: "Catch me!" and scampered round the air-raid shelters with Hermann in eager pursuit.

They ended up in a clawing, growling ball of teeth and fur, beside a clump of weedy yellow chrysanthemums. Hermann dug his teeth into Mr. Perkins' ear. Mr. Perkins yelped. Suddenly Hermann sat back on his haunches, panting. Mr. Perkins rolled over and made a set at him, growling happily.

—Lay off, said Hermann. Come and look at this.

Mr. Perkins turned. Nearby, on a long wood and iron seat, a man was lying full length, asleep. Mr. Perkins eyed him from end to end . . . collarless; old, frayed and patched coat; threadbare flannel trousers . . . ; sacking tied with string around the lower part of his legs, a bare foot peeping through the open toe of one boot.

—A tramp, he said with distaste. No kennel.

—I can see that. Don't you like him? He smells quite reasonable.

—It's not his smell. He's dirty.

—Well, maybe he hasn't licked himself. Didn't you know humans had to have a place to go to before they can clean themselves? Their tongues aren't any use to them, poor brutes.

—There's no excuse for being dirty.

—I don't see it. The man at our kennel wouldn't let him lick himself there. And humans aren't allowed to clean themselves for nothing even in a public lamp-post.

Mr. Perkins pondered this a moment before he got the meaning.

—But if he hasn't any money. . . .

—Hold on, said Hermann. Let's speak our own language. This "money" stuff means bones, doesn't it? Well then, bones can mean either just bones or money. It comes to the same thing, anyway.

—Well, all right. If he hasn't any bones he shouldn't be sleeping out.

—Out what? yapped Hermann. *Outside a kennel.* Why not?

I'd like to see anybody stop me sleeping outside a kennel. *It's a human law.* But perhaps he hasn't a kennel of his own. *That doesn't make any difference.* And this law, then, says other people have to share their kennels with him if he hasn't one of his own? *Oh, no.* Well, what can he do then? *He can get a kennel for the night in exchange for bones.*

—But he hasn't any bones. Look at him! *Then he should go to the Public Kennelman.* And this man will give him a kennel for the night? *Yes.* But suppose he doesn't want to sleep in a kennel? *He must.* What will they do if he barks no? *The police may order him to give up five pounds . . . I mean, a lot of bones.* But he hasn't got any! *It makes no difference. . . .*

—It makes a lot of difference to him. I can't sort this out, grumbled Hermann. Now, take this Peer fellow we were talking about. Could he sleep out here? Although he has enough bones to buy a kennel for the night?

—Yes.

—So a man who can afford a kennel can sleep under the stars and a man who can't mustn't?

—I suppose that's what it amounts to.

Hermann took a deep breath and was off again in full cry: Well, choke me with Bob Martin's! Surely, if it's wrong for one, it's wrong for the other? *No. If a Peer does it they say he's eccentric.* What's that? *It means he does strange things that other people don't do.* So does this chap. *Yes, but people like a Peer to do it. Shows he's human.* Aren't they both human? *Yes . . . but I mean, it amuses people to think that a Peer should sleep out when he doesn't have to.* Why is it funny? Well, said Mr. Perkins, grinning, *imagine a man with enough bones to have a kennel of his own doing this!*

—Ah, I see, said Hermann slowly. It all comes down to bones. It always does, even with humans. But they don't seem to realize it. I wonder, he added, why they're so much kinder to us than they are to one another.

—It gives them pleasure, said Mr. Perkins, omnisciently. It gives them a feeling of virtue and kindness.

—Doesn't it give them pleasure to be kind to other humans?

—Oh, yes.

—Then why aren't they?

—I think, barked Mr. Perkins, after a pause, I think they demand

more gratitude than other human beings can give. They like to have their hand licked, as you might say.

Hermann thought this over.—No, he said at last. I think you're barking up the wrong tree. Mind you, we dogs are very fair to them. A good kennel, morningbone and evenbone . . . it's worth a fair bit of slipper-fetching. But, you know, they'd run after us even if we gave 'em nothing back. Come on, I'll prove it to you.

—Where are we going? barked Mr. Perkins, as they left the sleeping tramp and trotted across the grass.

—Not far, said Hermann. That kennel, there. There's the chap we're going to bark to—on the steps.

Mr. Perkins looked. On the top step of the house sat a huge tabby tomcat, blinking like an owl.—I thought you . . . I mean, we . . . hated all cats? said Mr. Perkins.

—Only when they run, said Hermann. Never go for a cat unless it runs. And never go for a cat like that . . . look at his claws! They had reached the steps. The big cat blinked at them benignly.

—Good morning, Michael, said Hermann politely. Mice day! The big cat continued to blink in silence.

—He sits and thinks like that for hours on end, said Hermann, admiringly. He's a regular fishionary.

Michael spoke at last, in a rich bass voice. I'm planning, he said. We must think about post-war problems now. And one of the most urgent is the mousing-problem. Unless we solve it we may be facing . . .

—Catastrophe? suggested Mr. Perkins, with a grin. Michael frowned. Kittenish levity, he commented acidly.

—Don't be annoyed with him, said Hermann, anxiously. He's very young and very ignorant. I want you to enlighten him a little. Michael opened his yellow eyes wide. Fee? he asked. .

—I've found a new rat-hole round the corner. I'll show it to you to-night. Hermann turned to Mr. Perkins. He's a member of a very big firm, he said; Roebucksingletonandwotherspoonsolicitors—that's it; thirteen yaps long.

—Fee accepted. What do you wish to know? asked Michael suddenly.

—On behalf of my friend Snooks, here: how do you treat human beings? Michael looked at him. You could have told him that yourself, he said. Treat them with supreme contempt.

—And yet, said Mr. Perkins, they still feed you . . .

—And stroke me . . .

—And attend to all your wants?

—Immediately.

—But you catch mice in return?

—Not for them. Don't be a kitten.

—You give nothing at all in return?

—Claws in the agreement, murmured Michael. I do just as I please. And all I do is to please myself.

—And what do you suggest is the best way to treat humans to ensure good service from them? asked Mr. Perkins.

—Treat 'em rough. Ignore 'em. Come and go as you please. Demand and see that you get fish and stroking at all hours convenient to you and not otherwise. Discourage all undue familiarities with a swift scratch. In fact, I'll quote you the agreement my firm drew up. It goes like this:

THE MAN agrees to let and MICHAEL is willing to take the RESIDENTIAL FLAT situate on the first floor TOGETHER with the use in common with the man and other tenants of the Building of the entrance hall lifts staircases and passages of the Building and other parts which MICHAEL does not desire for his private use EXCEPT AND RESERVED unto MICHAEL all sofas and easy-chairs or reputed easy-chairs appertaining to any portion or portions of the Building which he may occupy or desire to occupy at any time AND ALSO EXCEPT AND RESERVED unto MICHAEL the free passage and uninterrupted use of the easy-chair sofa rug blanket or cushion which shall be deemed by MICHAEL to be nearest to the fire AND ALSO EXCEPT AND RESERVED unto MICHAEL the right to make and enforce such rules and regulations as are deemed by MICHAEL reasonably or unreasonably in the opinion of the man or other tenant of the Building to be necessary from time to time for the convenience and comfort of MICHAEL who agrees to HOLD the said FLAT for a period determinable by him at any time without prior notice and without fee deposit rent or any other obligation whatsoever. . . .

Mr. Perkins breathed deeply. Michael licked his white chest. —Young fellow, he purred, I'm a cat who made his own way from the bottom of the tree to the top. I give you three words of advice

—worth their weight in fish: treat 'em rough! They love it. Good morning to you. He ran a fat, sleek paw over his face, rose and walked with rich dignity down the steps.

—Going for a stroll? queried Hermann, politely.

—Business, miaouwed Michael briefly. I have to see a mouse-agent.

They trotted back to their own place in silence. Mr. Perkins sat on the step a moment while Hermann went inside. He was back in a moment.

—I say, he yapped, you'd better come inside—he's barking about you. Together they went into the living-room. The man and another man were standing together. . . .

—That's him, said the man. 'Course, he's only a mongrel. . . .

—They'll pay anything for 'em. Breed or no breed, said the other man. Rationing or no rationing, people will have dogs.

Mr. Perkins pricked up his ears. Planning to sell him, were they? He listened eagerly.

—She's not a pure breed 'erself, you know, said the other man. So I reckon 'e'll do. 'E looks 'ealthy.

—Been well looked after, said the man, proudly. 'Course, I ought to charge you something by rights. . . .

—Nay, come off it, George. I thought we was pals. . . .

A feeling of foreboding was stealing over Mr. Perkins. So it wasn't a case of selling him . . . what could it be? Enlightenment came suddenly and devastatingly.

—Tell you what I'll do, said the other man ingratiatingly. You don't charge me nothing and I'll give you first choice of the pups. . . . Christ! What's up?

The cause of his alarm was Mr. Perkins. With one shrill yelp he leaped for the door and vanished down the corridor.

—Hey, come back! yapped Hermann. What are you scared about? There's nothing to it. . . .

He waddled to the door of the room, then outside. Mr. Perkins had vanished. Hermann made his way back to the hearth-rug, grumbling.

—Must ha' gorn arter a cat, said the man. He'll be back for his meal.

Hermann put his muzzle between his paws and snorted with disgust.—Not if I know him, he grouched. He's gone for good.

I got him a kennel. I got him bones. And now they offer him . . . Bah! And he runs away! He's as unnatural as a human.

* * *

Mr. Perkins was at that moment running as fast as four legs would take him, away from the house. In those two blissful days of ease and good feeling he had thought it possible that he might be able to adopt a dog's life with equanimity—pleasure, even. But this was too much.

He ran in sheer terror . . . and his feet led him back instinctively to the place he once knew best. Down Smithfield he went, and down Farringdon Street and up Fleet Street. He ran and ran until his tongue hung out and he panted painfully. He was dying for human company . . . and human sympathy . . . and . . .

—That dog! screamed a woman, it's mad!

In an instant there was pandemonium. People slashed at Mr. Perkins with walking-sticks and umbrellas. A pale, bespectacled student shinned up the post of a bus-stop and hurled his sheaf of books. Mr. Perkins dodged, turned, twisted and ran. People fell away before him, then fell in together and chased him. He couldn't go on much longer.

Suddenly, just past the end of Fetter Lane, he saw a narrow alley on his right and dived down it. Before his pursuers reached the turning, Mr. Perkins' desperate eyes had seen a door . . . ajar. He slipped through. In front of him were rows of wooden benches. He crept under one of them and lay panting . . . and a strange sound filled his ears, drowning the thin noise of the pursuit outside.

Mr. Perkins listened to the sound. It rose and fell, monotonous and mournful. His terrier-instinct told him to howl. Then Experience whispered to him:—Shut up, you fool. That's music!

So it was. Mr. Perkins cocked an ear and listened:

“O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come . . .”

A strange nostalgia seized him. These were humans, singing. No, not just “humans”, a race apart . . . they were his own kind.

These were the breed to whom he belonged. Into his mind came memories of his talks with Hermann . . . re-stated in human terms.

The humans couldn't control their money-system, they couldn't reorganize their Parliamentary system, they talked a lot about justice and equality, and because they talked they did nothing. They were unkind to one another and sentimentalized over dogs and cats while their own breed went hungry and homeless. But—they were his own kind. . . .

The music rose, fell, and died away. A big tear of self-pity welled from Mr. Perkins' eye, rolled down his muzzle and dripped on to his right paw.

There was a brief silence, then a shuffling of feet on the tiled floor. Mr. Perkins crept along under the bench until the rows of boots and shoes formed a screen in front of him.

Then, suddenly, a voice rang out . . . a voice amplified by echoes from the stone walls, a voice that was deep and rich and sonorous.

—Brethren, intoned the Voice, we meet together to-day under the shadow of Sorrow and of a loss that has touched the life of every one of us under this sacred roof. . . .

Mr. Perkins stiffened, and one ear rose automatically.—Crikey, he said to himself, I'm in a church!

Then:—I speak, said the Voice, of our dear Brother, our Brother of the Pen. One who was known and yet unknown. One whose writings touched the hearts of millions, who was their guide, philosopher and friend . . . well and aptly named John Greatheart!

Mr. Perkins sat up, both ears now rigid, his mouth open, his head on one side.

The Voice went on:—We, however, of the Inner Circle, were yet more fortunate than they. We knew the real John Greatheart . . . a simple, lovable colleague, with the simple, lovable name of . . . Samuel Perkins.

The effect on Mr. Perkins was electric. He tried to stand on his hind legs, reach to his full height. He had a vague idea of lifting a paw high above the congregation and shouting:—I'm not dead. I'm here! All that happened, however, was that he banged his head on the underside of the pew. Mr. Perkins subsided with a whimper. . . .

—S-s-sh! What was that? whispered another voice, while the pulpit monotone went on. A large and hairy hand came under the

seat. Mr. Perkins drew back in sudden terror. The hand came nearer, touched his coat, paused. . . .

—A blessed dog! Half a tick.

The hand stroked him a moment, then:—P-ss-t! I've gottim.

A sudden grab. Mr. Perkins felt himself seized by the neck, lifted unceremoniously into a blaze of electric light, then plunged down on to something soft and warm. Another hand swept down and closed around his muzzle.

The pulpit voice swelled into perspective again.

—Sam-u-el Perkins! The simple, ingenuous name that fate had given to one with the heart of a Sir Philip Sidney! Yet the wealth and warmth of his spirit lay hidden until discovered by one who seeks ever to assuage the spiritual thirst of our less fortunate brethren. I refer, of course, to our revered brother, Lord Flushwater. . . .

Mr. Perkins shook his head vigorously. "Discovered," indeed! Why . . . ! He received a hearty slap across the head.

—Quiiii-et, you brute, or I'll throttle you!

Mr. Perkins froze. It was the voice of Alf Williams, Industrial Correspondent on the *Monitor*. Mr. Perkins glanced up, cautiously. It was Alf's lap he was sitting on . . . and Alf was whispering to . . . why, yes, it was Murgatroyd. And Murgatroyd was whispering to Zipp, the editor, on his left. . . .

—This ruddy dog's going to yelp at any minute. . . .

—Tell Alf to take it outside. . . .

Another voice, further off, whispering hoarsely. . . .

—Hey, Zipp. What you got there?

It was the voice of Lord Flushwater himself.

—A dog, Chief. Sneaked into the service. I'll have it chucked out.

—Nothing of the sort! Lord Flushwater's voice shook with suppressed inspiration. You're a fool, Zipp! You're crazy. . . . Hang on to that dog! Photographer here? Well, sit that dog on the chancel steps, y' fool, and getta picture. Y'know—"Dog He Saved Pays Last Tribute to John Greatheart".

—But, Chief. . . it might not be the same dog!

—Zipp! !

—Yes, Chief. . . . O.K., Chief.

Above the whispering the Voice droned on:—And there can be

few whose eyes were dry when they reached the end of Lord Flushwater's testimony to his sterling worth in a memorable leading article. I can do no better than quote His Lordship's own words. He wrote: "Who is the true friend of man? I will tell you: The Dog. Who gives so much and asks so little as The Dog? No one. Let no one grumble, therefore, that Samuel Perkins, that Great Heart of all Greathearts, gave his life for a Dog. Greater Love hath no man than this: that he lay down his life for his Friend."

—To this, added the clergyman, I would add the testimony of many friends and colleagues of Samuel Perkins. He was, they all agree, a man of singular . . .

He broke off. A strange commotion was taking place below him. Then there was a torrent of barking. He looked down. . . .

Alf Williams was carrying a struggling terrier to the chancel steps. To their right a photographer was fumbling in a fibre suitcase for a flash-bulb. Zipp and Murgatroyd were hovering anxiously near. Many of the congregation were standing up in the pews. Some were on the seats. Others poured into the aisle. . . . The clergyman gaped.

—'Sallright, called Lord Flushwater, hoarsely. Carry on . . . just-want-a picture . . . soonbeover. . . .

Obediently, the eulogy of the struggling, snapping Samuel Perkins was continued: . . . *they all agree, a man of singular charm. Shy, reserved, timid in the company of others, he had, nevertheless, a deep insight into the workings of the human heart and . . .*

—Ready, Joe? called Williams to the photographer.

—Yeah. Let go of him and jump out o' the way before he moves. I want him sitting on the chancel steps, if possible. . . .

That iron hand was still round Mr. Perkins' muzzle. He was fuming with anger. Burying him! Before he was dead! Saying Lord Flushwater had discovered him! Not saying that Lord Flushwater had sacked him! Making . . . yes, making a stunt of him at his own funeral!

—Ready? said Lord Flushwater, panting a little.

—Yeah, said the photographer. O.K., Alf . . . let go of him.

Mr. Perkins was released. But so incensed was he that he played right into the hands of the photographer. He sat where he was . . . he turned back his lips . . . and he snarled fluently at Alf Williams. . . .

—Call yourself a pal? yapped Mr. Perkins. Letting this old so-

and-so make a stunt out of me when he fired me? And you, Murgie, you dirty dog. . . .

—Got it! cried the photographer. It's a pip!

—Grr . . . r! Yap, yap . . . yap-yap-yap! barked Mr. Perkins. . . . There was a surge of laughter from the congregation.

Lord Flushwater swung round. Stop that! he called. Remember where y'are. Then to his staff: O.K., boys. Get that dog out of here and we'll carry on.

This was the last straw.

—Get me out of here? spluttered Mr. Perkins, dancing with rage. Get ME out of here? Whose funeral is it? I've got a bone to pick with you, snarled Mr. Perkins, turning to Lord Flushwater. I'll show you. I'll have the pants off you. . . .

—Look out, Chief!

—*Zipp! Hold that dog off me!* He's mad! Look out!

Mr. Perkins, indeed, was foaming at the mouth. Everybody scattered as he made a dead set at Lord Flushwater. In a simple, primitive situation like this, the power and the glory of His Lordship were as nothing. He took one look at Mr. Perkins' dripping jaws and scooted down the aisle.

—Gerroutomiway! howled Lord Flushwater.

—Wait till I get my teeth into you . . . ! Mr. Perkins gasped, drawing nearer. . . .

—Pullimoff! shrieked Lord Flushwater, as he passed the font at full speed.

—I'll . . . ah! grunted Mr. Perkins, and he leaped. There was a rending sound, a shout from Lord Flushwater, and a fleeting glimpse of a white patch against dark clothing as he vanished through the door into the street.

Mr. Perkins shook the piece of cloth vigorously, growling with the satisfaction of victory. He did not notice Alf Williams creeping up on him.

Suddenly, Williams pounced. There was a yelp from Mr. Perkins, then darkness closed round him. Alf Williams rolled the squirming, struggling terrier in his overcoat and made for the door. Behind him order was being restored and the service continued.

—Here . . . what you got in that coat?

It was a policeman.

—Did you see Lord Flushwater come out of here, sergeant?

asked Williams politely. He called all ordinary policemen sergeants, on principle, and all sergeants inspectors.

A lovely smile adorned the constable's broad features—Seen 'im? he said. Ah . . . I seen 'im . . . not for long, though. He went pretty quick. What a picksher!

—How do you mean? Was there a photographer?

—Yes . . . young feller from the *Daily Mirror*. I think he got two pickshers . . . fore and aft, as you might say. . . .

—Well, said Williams, just give this little parcel a pat—he's the dog that did it.

—Where you taking 'im? Is 'e yours?

—No . . . but I know the owner. I'm taking him to my place, lied Williams.

—There may be a case about this, warned the policeman. Happen I ought to take him to the station. . . .

—Oh, don't bother . . . look, here's my card. You can always get me at the office if there is any trouble. Only, see . . . I'm hoping there won't be. This dog belongs to someone on the *Daily Monitor*. If His Lordship found out, he might sack 'em. See? I'm just trying to help.

The policeman had an understanding heart.

He winked.—All right . . . I got a dog meself.

Williams hurried down Fleet Street with his still-struggling burden. He turned up into Red Lion Court and into a small block of flats and took the lift to the third floor. Here was the Williams residence . . . picked because of its nearness to several oases in the arid acres of newsprint.

Westward lay Peele's Bar and the Falcon, the Clachan, the Cock, the Blue Anchor and the George. Eastward were the Cheshire Cheese, Poppin's, the Punch, the Old Bell, the Falstaff and the Press Club. Mr. Williams' flat was well furnished with beer-mug mats as visual reminders of these places.

He dropped his bundle on the hearthrug and stood back to await events. There was a squirming and a heaving, a couple of smothered sneezes and Mr. Perkins crept from the folds of material with a wary eye open for trouble. In his teeth he still held the piece of black material that had once adorned the less noble portion of Lord Flushwater.

It was a strange situation for Mr. Perkins. Here he was, face to

face with one of his greatest friends. Here he was, once again in a flat where he had slept off the effects of many a night of gaiety. Here he was . . .

—Good dog, said Mr. Williams.

Mr. Perkins winced. Desolation overwhelmed him. At any moment that policeman might come to drag him away . . . but, why had Williams lied about him. How could he know Mr. Perkins' late owner? That man certainly did not work on the *Monitor*. Mr. Perkins put his head on one side and thought. Obviously, because Williams wanted to keep him. Why? Williams gave him the answer.

—Come here, boy. . . . He reached out a hand. Gimme that cloth.

Mr. Perkins went forward slowly and dropped the material at his feet. He sat back on his haunches and looked up as Williams lifted the fragment of noble trousers.

—I'm going to frame this, said Williams with delight. And right now. . . . He walked into the kitchen and returned after some clattering. Here, have this . . . you've earned it. And he put before Mr. Perkins a plate on which lay a cold chop.

Mr. Perkins looked at him, a world of longing in his eyes.—Look here, Alf, he began in a shrill yap, I know you'll find this difficult to believe. . . .

—Ssh! Quiet, boy! Well, don't you want the dam' thing . . . ? A large hand reached down for the plate.

Canine instinct and common sense came to Mr. Perkins' rescue. He seized the chop just in time and ran into a corner.

Life was a strange adventure but, as Hermann had so wisely said :
—*It all comes down to bones.*

* * *

It was morning. Alf Williams was sitting in an easy chair beside the electric fire. Mr. Perkins was dozing happily beside him.

A night's hard thinking had resigned him to his lot. After all,

he was alive—though not in the form he wanted. He had a roof over his head, there seemed every prospect of sufficient food; he hadn't to work and, best of all, he was among people he knew and liked.

There had been quite a party the night before. Mr. Perkins had been feted and petted by half Fleet Street. They had praised him and drunk his health constantly and for hours. Mr. Perkins reviewed their conversation with an almost philosophic detachment. It was clear that none of them really regarded Lord Flushwater as a public benefactor or they would not take such pleasure in his discomfiture.

It also seemed clear—and this point had scarcely troubled the mind of Mr. Perkins in his human state—that none of them was doing what he wanted.

There were many tales of stories that ought to be told, of stories that had been suppressed, of stories that had been altered to fit what was called "the policy line."

Mr. Perkins found himself feeling an odd resentment about this. Why, if it wasn't true, did they do it? He recalled something that Alf Williams had said during a heated discussion.

—Take old Perkins, for instance, said Williams. He was a big name . . . everybody knew John Greatheart. But it was the *Monitor* that made him . . . and it was the *Monitor* that killed him. Yes, I know he was run over . . . but he was dead as soon as he was fired. What is a reporter, anyway? What is a special writer? He can only write what His Lordship wants written. If he doesn't, he gets sacked—and we all know it and we might as well admit it. The only interference with the liberty of the Press comes from the people who own it. Look here. We pay God-knows-what for a famous footballer to write a series. He's too dam' illiterate to write his own name. Right. A reporter writes it for him . . . ghosting. But aren't we all ghosting for Lords Flushwater and Wembley and Wotherpool? We don't really exist in our own right as individuals with opinions of our own. They'll only let you live . . . and we don't live unless we're writing . . . they'll only let you live if you die as an individual. We're just ghosts.

Mr. Perkins yapped sourly: You're quite ready to be a ghost at eighteen guineas a week.

—What's up with the dog? Somebody at the door? No. . . .

Well, if it barks again put your foot behind it . . . better start getting it house-trained right away.

Mr. Perkins subsided with a baffled growl.

Webster took up the argument.—We campaigned for better pensions for soldiers, remember, and better allowances for wives. You can't say there was no social virtue in that.

—My paper, said Murgatroyd, campaigned like hell for the Beveridge Plan. Then, suddenly, we jumped completely round and began to hedge. You know the idea . . . must build up post-war trade first. Got to wait and see if we can afford it . . . and so on. The old Tory game of jam to-morrow. . . . Why?

—How did readers take it? asked Webster.

—Badly. They were all for us at first . . . we were on a good thing when we backed Beveridge. People saw the justice of it. Circulation was going up—at the expense of the others, of course. Then . . .

—That's what it is, said Williams, seizing the conversation. There are two conflicting interests. His Lordship wants his paper to succeed so he tries to give the public what it wants. Never mind whether the Beveridge Plan is good or bad. It doesn't matter. The point is that people want it and they'll buy the paper that backs it. Right. You jump on it. You go crusading. Then what happens? His Lordship and His Lordship's pals discover that planning means the end of a reservoir of out-of-works . . . cheap labour to force down the wages of those who are in work. They turn right round the other way . . . to protect the interests of their own crowd at the expense of the public. So it boils down to this: papers exist for the public interest so long as it doesn't interfere with the newspaper proprietors' interests.

Webster laughed: You going to resign?

—*Catch him!* snarled the disgruntled Mr. Perkins.

—I can't afford the luxury of a free conscience.

—*Har, har!* Sarcastic growl from Mr. Perkins.

—Well, start a newspaper of your own.

—Give me half a million, said Williams.

—Have a Scotch instead. . . .

Mr. Perkins, flung himself down on the rug and grumbled into his paws: It all comes down to bones!

—Hark at the dog . . . he's fed up with your bloody Communism.

—Parlour Communism! yelled Mr. Perkins, leaping up. He wants the system changed for him—but catch him suffering anything for his blessed faith! Not him!!

—What *is* up with the dog?

—It wants to go outside, you fool! Come on, boy (a firm hand gripped Mr. Perkins and propelled him outside the door into the darkened corridor). Out you go! Go and find yourself a nice lamp-post.

The door closed. Mr. Perkins, whimpering now in the cold, sank down outside and put his ear to the space at the bottom.

—I'm not a Communist, anyway, said Williams. I hate being called comrade by people I don't know.

—Well, you can't change the system, anyway, whatever you are.

—The Russians did.

—I said you were a Red.

—I'm not. But I think newspapers ought to be altered. You take an aeroplane, for instance. Hundreds of skilled people build it. You take months training a crew to fly it. It's a lethal weapon and, wrongly handled, it may even do damage to the people it was built to protect. Well now, said Williams, warming up, you wouldn't put a financier who knew nothing about flying in charge of that plane . . . why put him in control of a newspaper?

—Is a newspaper a lethal weapon?

—Yes, when it's being used to promote sectional or party interests. Or personal interests, added Williams.

—Well, dammit, who pays your wages?

—You don't want a State newspaper, do you?

—By God, you'd get your opinions controlled then!

—Is it better to have your statements controlled by an elected assembly of the people or by one man with a lot of money and no sense of responsibility?

—Parliament's full of nitwits.

—It's full of nitwits when it opposes His Lordship and the pride of democracy when it does what he wants. You know that.

—How long am I going to be left out here? yapped Mr. Perkins. Let me in! Let me in! No one heard him.

—Newspapers do a lot of good work, Alf, said Webster. Exposing share-pushers, for instance.

—That's cheap glory. Nine times out of ten the people can't hit

back, anyway. We may say we do it for the public weal . . . but you know as well as I do that there's only one motive—circulation.

—Oh, well . . . anyhow, we don't want a State newspaper. I think State control's a bad thing, anyhow.

—State control's winning a war for us.

—But you don't want hordes of bureaucrats in peace-time. You'll agree with your own proprietor there. He does stand up for the Little Feller's liberty.

—Do you remember the slump?

—Yes.

—Well, what would have happened if there hadn't been a horde of bureaucrats appointed to hand over the dole to the unemployed?

—There'd have been a revolution. But unemployment is a bad thing. It's not a good thing because it creates bureaucrats.

—I'm not saying it is. I'm only pointing out that Lord Flushwater and his kind are willing to create these hordes of bureaucrats themselves when it suits their own ends. The dole saved their precious system for them. What on earth's that?

—Yap, yap! Let me in. Is this the way to treat a pal? yelped Mr. Perkins outside the door. Talk, talk, talk . . . that's all you do.

—It's the dog. Better let him in. Here, come on, hound. Here, boy, lie down. . . .

—Put a cushion down for him.

—Here you are. Good boy, bedtime. Mr. Perkins slouched grumblingly to the cushion before the fire and settled down.—I wish you'd all go to bed, he growled under his breath, and let's have a bit of peace.

But the contestants were still eager to pursue the subject.

—We're getting away from the point, said Webster to Williams. Do you want a State newspaper?

—Not if it means there's only one.

—Then you can't keep private enterprise out.

—What about public enterprise? Couldn't you start newspapers by public subscription and keep public control under an editorial board?

—I don't know. If you did get one . . . what a job you'd have with every subscriber bellyaching to see his opinions in print!

—But now you've got only one man in control . . . and he can demand to see his ideas in print.

—What we need is strong editors.

—Any editor who opposed a proprietor would be sacked. There aren't any real editors any more—only managers working under absentee landlords.

—Bitter, isn't he?

—Sorry, said Williams. Anyone who thinks is liable to get bitter.

—Do you suppose the public care what happens to newspapers? After all, they don't complain . . . they get what they want.

—Hear, hear! barked Mr. Perkins suddenly. Who cares, anyway. What do you care, Alf Williams? What do . . . here! Lay off!

Mr. Perkins' remarks petered out in a strangled gasp as Alf Williams put the toe of his boot under the cushion and lifted it and Mr. Perkins into the far corner.

—Dog needs discipline, said Williams. Now where were we? Oh yes, the public's trouble is that they don't know what they've been missing. In peace-time there was hardly a place on the globe from which you couldn't get the news of what was going on in a matter of hours at most. But we didn't tell people what was going on in the world. Not what was really going on, even in the great capitals. The same newspapers that praise Churchill to-day are the ones that attacked him when he warned us of a coming war. If we'd given a proper, objective news service to the public this country might have been more prepared.

After the war we shall have to take notice of what's happening outside England—not just murders in Chicago, sex-crimes in Paris and the love-life of the latest film-star to arrive at the Dorchester.

We've got to tell what's happening all over the world. We've got to be more serious. We've got to have trained correspondents working in foreign capitals. The peace of the world depends on the whole world conducting its affairs openly, in front of its people. Can't you see it? Can't you see that what I'm really arguing about is the real Freedom of the Press, not the freedom to be irresponsible?

Newspaper owners say, "Give the public what it wants. Nobody complains of what we give, so they must be getting what they want." That's a silly argument. If you gave a starving man a slice of bread

he'd not grumble but that's no reason for withholding the steak you could give him—and which he needs much more.

—Here, wait a minute, chipped in Webster. If you're going to have a world service of news with people in most of the capitals, it's going to cost a hell of a lot. No newspaper could afford it!

—That's what I'm coming to, said Williams. The job has grown too big for private enterprise. In my view, it has been so for a long time . . . since the last war, in fact. Look at the position as it will be when war ends . . . the need for world understanding that will exist if we're to avoid another war. We have to meet a need . . . needs come before wishes. We have the biggest and most important job of all time ahead of us. It's a challenge. . . . It's . . .

—Don't get so bloody lyrical. Come down to earth, Alf. This country is committed to private enterprise. After all, it gives every man the same chance. . . .

—Does it? The big store crushes out the small one, the chain-store cuts out the big store; the bigger businesses amalgamate . . . they call it "rationalize" . . . and crush out the very competition they swear they believe in. Remember the newspapers that were closed down in the early 'thirties? Where's your free enterprise end? In a denial of itself. That's the logical path of the profit system. Tell me, what are we fighting for?

—Against dictatorship.

—What's wrong with a dictator?

—You know the old phrase as well as I do: "All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

—But a dictator does claim to give allegiance to his own country, at least. An international cartel owes allegiance to no country. Its directors can be British, American, German and French. Their allegiance is owed only to their profits. If Hitler conquered Britain we'd have an extra-territorial dictatorship. A cartel is the same thing. Why not fight that as well as Hitler?

—It's the system to which the country's committed.

—Can't we change it?

—No, we can't, Alf, and don't be a chump. A fight . . . killing and bloodshed . . . is a simple thing, easily understood. You kill or get killed. People will give their bodies to be mutilated but they won't go to battle with their minds. You see. When the war's over men'll come rushing back, eager to get their old jobs. They'll want

a quiet life—and by God they'll have earned it—but they won't give a dam about the political or economic system so long as they're let alone more or less.

—And they'll let Lord Flushwater do their thinking for them?

—Willingly. You'll never get people to think about what they read in the papers or why it's there, or why something better or more informative isn't there. That's the kind of dictatorship they can't see. It's a hidden government. His ruddy Lordship'll be running the *Daily Monitor* in the same old way long after he's fired you.

—Well, I'll tell you what'll happen if something isn't done . . . there'll be another war within twenty years.

—So what? We'll all be too old for military service, anyway.

—Yes, that's just it, said Williams, wearily. We'll all be bloody-minded old men, cheering the others on to waste their lives.

Conversation stopped.

—Look at the dog, said Webster suddenly.

Mr. Perkins was yawning. He made no pretence of putting his paw before his mouth this time. He surveyed the group of reporters and yapped, heedless of Alf Williams's "discipline".

—I wish you'd shut up, barked Mr. Perkins. You never get anywhere with your talking. You never do anything . . . give it a rest.

—No doubt about it, said Murgatroyd, you've bored him stiff, Alf. H'm . . . wonder what sort of a life he has?

—A dog's life, barked Mr. Perkins happily—and lay down to sleep.

* * *

And now it was morning. Mr. Perkins was eager to read the newspapers and as soon as Alf Williams fell into a doze after his cup of tea, he nosed the pages of the ones that had fallen to the floor.

The *Daily Mirror* was his first care. They had done him proud. There were two large-sized pictures of Lord Flushwater, first emerging in panic from the church and, second, a fine rear view as he scuttled down Fleet Street to the shelter of the *Daily Monitor* office.

The headline was bold and said what Mr. Perkins expected: "When a Dog Bites a Peer . . . It's NEWS." The caption was in the paper's gayest style:

"Picture-of-the-year proves wrong old newspaper adage that when a Dog Bites a Man it Isn't News. Precocious pup yesterday took poor view of plump newspaper tycoon Lord Flushwater; outflanked, attacked enemy from rear with result shown above. Picture below shows that pup secured some booty after pinning teeth in Peer's pants. Our Dumb Blonde suggests caption, 'A Little Behind with the Rent'. What a girl, says we!"

Mr. Perkins grinned and turned to the *Monitor*. Right across Page One, giving place only to the report of the Russian advance into Rumania, was a magnificent picture of himself, sitting on the steps of the chancel. Above it was the wording Lord Flushwater himself had ordered: "DOG HE SAVED PAYS LAST TRIBUTE TO JOHN GREATHEART." Below it was a story by Leila Honeybrooke, the *Monitor's* woman reporter. It was beautiful and touching and entirely unfettered by facts.

Ever since the accident in which that great, human, warm-hearted contributor Samuel (JOHN GREATHEART) Perkins had been killed, she wrote, a forlorn, ragged, nondescript little terrier had been hanging around the office of the *Daily Monitor*. All attempts by the commissionaire to drive it away had failed.

Came the day of the funeral service . . . the sad-eyed crowds . . . the weeping women, . . . the little spray of violets brought to the editor by the Old Lil, doyenne of Piccadilly's flower girls. . . .

Came the wreaths: one, from the Tailwaggers' Club, in the shape of a bone fashioned from bronze chrysanthemums. . . .

Came the mourning colleagues, came the coaches and the long procession to the church.

And . . . came the Little Dog, trotting to keep up with the mourners. They reached the church and filed in. 'The Little Dog' went, too.

An officious verger tried to turn him out, but at that moment one of the congregation cried: "That's the dog he tried to save. . . . I saw the accident!"

There was a hush over the assembly. The Little Dog slipped away from the verger's nerveless hand. It walked slowly down the aisle and sat quietly on the chancel steps. The solemn service proceeded.

At the end, as the Benediction was being pronounced, the Little

Dog slipped away and vanished through a side door. But before he moved a lucky photographer had secured the moving picture shown above.

The Little Dog (added the account, touchingly) had Paid a Debt.

Mr. Perkins was quite moved by the story. He too had been a dog-lover. But he could not see Lord Flushwater letting his offence go by the board without some retaliation. Carefully he nosed up and down the columns. At last he found it. The last leading article. . . .

It was quite brief. It pointed out that more dogs were needed for the Services, to act as messengers and guards.

It suggested that it would be patriotic for every dog owner to give his faithful friend the chance of serving his country. Only the selfish would keep them at home. *A life of service*, said the article . . . *of service and discipline. What could be nobler!*

Mr. Perkins let his eye rest for a moment on that word "discipline" and felt a certain satisfaction. He must have bitten Lord Flushwater more deeply than he had hoped.

* * *

A knock at the door awoke Alf Williams, and he went to answer it. Mr. Perkins closed his eyes in pretended slumber but opened one of them as he heard voices and footsteps returning.

Across the floor came the stubby legs of his host. But behind them . . . ah, this was more in Samuel Perkins' line . . . there came two more; long, slim and attractive, in silk stockings. Mr. Perkins sat up and lifted one ear.

—Oh, isn't he sweet!

Mr. Perkins knew that voice. He lifted his head back. Yes, it was Leila Honeybrooke. Leila . . . ah, the memories! Mr. Perkins had been one of her many admirers. Hers had been a long course of conquest in Fleet Street, breaking hearts and fraying the temper of man with man. She was a good reporter, too . . . police courts, inquests, murders, interviews. She was the queen of interviewers.

Mr. Perkins felt his position keenly. He hung his head to hide the tears.

—Why, he's bashful, said Miss Honeybrooke, patting him and

gently pulling an ear. He's as bad as poor old Sammy Perkins. . . .

—Poor old Sam, said Williams. And then, a little hesitantly: Did he ever tell you . . . ?

—What? said Miss Honeybrooke. Oh, you mean that he was sweet on me. No, he never had the nerve. She sat down. Just think . . . I might have been a merry widow by now if he'd only proposed. Funny, isn't it? Mr. Perkins was all ears. No nerve, eh? He moved closer and laid his head between Miss Honeybrooke's knees. She stroked him gently.

—You certainly gave him a good write-up this morning, said Williams.

—What, about the dog in church? Is this really the one?

—Sure. He's been closer to His Lordship than any of us. A remarkable dog, added Mr. Williams. I respect his judgment as much as my own.

—Nice boy, said Miss Honeybrooke, caressing Mr. Perkins. Come, then . . .

Mr. Perkins had no need for bashfulness now. In one spring he was in Miss Honeybrooke's lap. He felt the gentle warmth of her. He lifted his head and licked her neck.

—Oh, isn't he sweet!

—He's taken a fancy to you. . . .

—Let me have him.

—Every man has his price, said Mr. Williams. Mr. Perkins gave him a dirty look. What was he getting at? Mr. Perkins felt the hair begin to bristle around his collar. But there was no need for alarm. . . .

—I'm out of Scotch, said Mr. Williams simply, with a wave of his hand around the room.

—Swap him for a bottle? Miss Honeybrooke had some friends in the trade. She always interviewed them when there were stories to be written about the whisky shortage—and the trade are always generous.

—Sure thing.

—Then he's mine.

It was a sad blow to Mr. Perkins' pride. To be swapped for a bottle of Scotch! Judas! But the thought swiftly passed and other and brighter prospects took its place.

—I came to ask, said Miss Honeybrooke, in those appealing accents which always got the news out of detective inspectors with-

out the necessity of buying them drinks, I came to ask if you could cover the British Association meeting for me this morning. It's a talk on Mice, by a chap who turns 'em blue. You'll be able to sell half a dozen paws to the *Evening Standard*. . . . Only need to look in for half an hour. Fun.

Alf Williams grunted.

—Oh, go on, Alf. Be a sport. . . . I'll see if I can get you some more Scotch.

—All right . . . all right. . . .

—Well, I'll be going.

Mr. Perkins was on the floor in an instant. He padded to the door, looked invitingly at Miss Honeybrooke and wagged his stump.—See, he's adopted me. She beamed as she rose.

—Bet he doesn't follow you out.

—Bet he does. . . .

Miss Honeybrooke tripped to the door and opened it.—Come on, boy, she said.

Mr. Perkins followed. Alf Williams stood on the hearth-rug, filling his pipe and watching quizzically. Miss Honeybrooke called from the corridor. Alf looked down on Mr. Perkins.

—I save your blessed life, he said. I take you in and feed you . . . on my meat ration, mind . . . and then you walk out on me. He wagged a finger at Mr. Perkins in the doorway. That's gratitude for you!

Mr. Perkins boiled over.—And you sell me for a bottle of lousy Scotch, he barked. Me, your best pal . . . ! He choked with the injustice of it all.

—He wants me to come, too, said Mr. Williams, erroneously.

Mr. Perkins looked at him witheringly. A thought struck him. He walked deliberately over to the standard lamp.

—You dirty little tyke! roared Williams. But Mr. Perkins was already through the door and in the corridor.

—My dog, I think, trilled Miss Honeybrooke as she closed the door.

* * *

Miss Honeybrooke was out. She had left Mr. Perkins in the flat, curled up cosily by the fire, on a large cushion, for it was a very

feminine establishment, designed for the comfort of its occupant. Many thoughts ran through Mr. Perkins' mind. It is to be feared that some of them were not strictly genteel.

He had sat on Miss Honeybrooke's lap and licked her face and neck with great heartiness when she said Give Mumsie a kiss . . . and even without that invitation.

He had trotted unconcernedly into the bedroom when Miss Honeybrooke was changing; a most ungentlemanly thing to do. —This is, indeed, a dog's life, said Mr. Perkins and gave a hop, skip and a jump around the hearth-rug.

—Gertcha! shouted a raucous voice. You old blank!

Mr. Perkins came to a full-stop. He cocked his ears and looked around warily. A man in the house? What was going on here?

—You're no lidy! said the voice.

Mr. Perkins looked up. The mystery was solved. From the ceiling over the settee hung a large wire cage. And in the cage was a parrot. Mr. Perkins stared at the parrot. The parrot blinked owlishly at Mr. Perkins.

—Gertcha! he repeated. You old blank. You're no lidy. Gertcha.

—No good talking to you, said Mr. Perkins aloud. You wouldn't understand a word I say.

A torrent of yapping broke from the parrot. Mr. Perkins understood it clearly. His ancestry was fully described in unflattering terms. He was a son-and-so and the son of so-and-so's and his future was grimly certain.

At last the parrot stopped for breath, closed its lids and pointed its beak blindly into space, ruffling up its feathers.

—I'm sorry, said Mr. Perkins, chastened but inquiring, I didn't know you understood our language.

—Don't judge others by your own ignorance, said the parrot. You're as bad as a news-editor.

—What do you know about news-editors? asked Mr. Perkins.

—All about 'em. Her father was one, said the parrot, nodding in the direction of Miss Honeybrooke's bedroom. He once ordered a story on "Do Parrots Think?". That's ignorance for you! Of course, he was only young . . . died at about fifty-five.

—How old are you? asked Mr. Perkins.

—A hundred and four.

The penalties of a newspaper training are apt to fall on a person suddenly and unexpectedly. Mr. Perkins was no exception. To what, he asked, do you attribute your longevity?

—To not answering damfool questions, said the parrot swiftly. But Mr. Perkins was bent on getting knowledge.

—Do you speak their language as well as ours? he asked.

—Better, if anything.

—Don't you talk to them?

—Bless my soul! exclaimed the parrot, I've a better use for my time. . . . I like to read, though that's not the pleasure it used to be. In the old days, years and years ago, they used to line my cage with pages from *Chambers' Journal* or *Blackwood's Magazine*. Now it's usually the *News Chronicle*. I doubt if times have changed for the better.

—But don't you say anything to people except "Gertcha" and so on?

—Why should I? said the parrot in surprise. That's all they want me to say. It satisfies them, really. Two "Gertchas" and a "Blast" and they all start laughing and pass me some sugar. Simple things for simple minds, I say. They want me to talk but they don't want me to think.

—How do you know? asked Mr. Perkins.

—There was a young woman came in here yesterday, said the parrot. Quite an impressive hen. . . .

—Come, come, that's no way . . .

—Your mind has been corrupted by human intercourse, said the parrot, severely. To proceed: she came in here yesterday and spent three solid hours sitting under my cage repeating, "You're a twerp. . . . You're a twerp." Do you call that a sensible conversation for thinking people to hold?

—She wanted you to repeat it, said Mr. Perkins. Why? countered the parrot. Well, said Mr. Perkins, she thought you'd say it when someone else came in.

—So what?

—Well, I mean . . . Well, said Mr. Perkins at last, it's funny when you're rude to people. It makes them laugh. It shows how clever you are.

—They think it's clever to be rude? asked the parrot.—Well,

said Mr. Perkins, seeking for an answer, it depends on who's being rude to whom. The parrot thought a minute.

—If Dr. Johnson was rude to Mr. Boswell, he said at last, that would be clever? It would? But if Mr. Boswell was rude to Dr. Johnson?

—He wouldn't, because Dr. Johnson could be ruder in return. The parrot asked why. Because he was better educated, said Mr. Perkins, floundering a bit. I don't get it, said the parrot.

—But, Mr. Perkins reminded him gently, you *do* say some of the things they ask you. . . . The parrot looked at him a long time.

—You're very young, he said at last. Very young. They feed me very well here and that's all they demand of me. "Gertcha, you old blank" and "You're no lidy". It's good for food and a cosy cage.

—Breaking faith with your conscience, said Mr. Perkins, quizzically.

—A man must live, said the parrot softly. Never done it yourself?

—Yes, said Mr. Perkins. He sighed. It all comes down to bones. . . .

—And sugar, said the parrot, hastily. And sugar, agreed Mr. Perkins. There was a long silence. Finally:

—Do you like living in a cage? asked Mr. Perkins. No, said the parrot, but I'd be a fool if I left. How would I live?

—Couldn't you fly back to . . . to Africa or wherever it is?

—I don't know where it is, said the parrot sadly. I dream sometimes of flying to a place where there's always sunshine and plenty of trees and nuts and fruit and someone with whom I could build a nest. But it's only a dream . . . even if I got there, I doubt if I'd be able to fend for myself. I was brought up in a cage, you see.

—But you'd chance that part of it—if you could get there? Like a bird, said the parrot.

—H'm, said Mr. Perkins, I wish you'd tell that to some of the humans. A lot of them are dissatisfied with life as they have to live it. They're in a cage, as you might say. They could change all their conditions themselves. But they're afraid that even if they got the conditions they want they might not be able to live under them.

—That sounds silly to me, said the parrot. Why wouldn't they?

—People tell them that human nature wouldn't let them, said Mr. Perkins.

—Why wouldn't it? They can control themselves, can't they?

—People tell them they can't. They say that greed and envy and laziness are so ingrained that they'd soon be back in the condition they started out from. There was a pause.

—Ever watched a lark? said the parrot suddenly.

—Sometimes, said Mr. Perkins.

—He's the lad for my sugar, said the parrot enthusiastically. He's got an idea he can fly up to the sun. It's kind of hereditary with him. Every morning he sets off to get there. Up he goes . . . up and up. Then you think he can't get any higher. But if you listen you'll hear him telling himself: "I'm not going to be licked. . . . I'm not going to be licked." He flutters and flounders about a bit in one place and you say to yourself, "He *is* licked, all right". Then he stops twittering and you see him getting a bit higher. Then another pause . . . and, by jiminy, he's got up another few feet. And so he goes on. . . .

—He has to come down to earth, though, said Mr. Perkins.

—But he goes up again next morning, said the parrot. He goes up in faith and he keeps trying. He believes he can do it. And one of these mornings—mark my words—you'll look out of your kennel and I'll look out of my cage and we'll see him going up and twittering and pausing and going up a little further. And he'll get smaller and smaller until we can't see him. But we'll hear his voice: "I'm not going to be licked. . . . I'm not going to be licked." And then that'll get fainter and fainter. And then there'll be a big silence. For a long, long time . . .

—And what'll happen then? asked Mr. Perkins.

—Suddenly, said the parrot quietly, suddenly, the sun will grow brighter and brighter . . . and all the birds on the face of the earth will start singing . . . all except the eagle . . . all the birds will begin to sing and then, all together, they'll rise up in a big cloud, up and up into the sky, all singing "It can be done . . . it can be done". And they'll go up . . . right out of sight. And then the song will die away on one long note of glory. And we'll know they've got to the sun, where every bird longs to be.

—And what about the eagle? asked Mr. Perkins.

—When he sees the lark has reached the sun, said the parrot, he'll go into his cave on the top of his mountain and cover his beak with his wing and he'll hide himself from the sun in shame because

he, the biggest and strongest and highest-flying bird of all, hadn't the courage to try it.

There were footsteps outside. The parrot looked at Mr. Perkins and winked. The door opened and Miss Honeybrooke came in.

—Gertcha! screamed the parrot. You're no lidy!

—Hello, Polly, said Miss Honeybrooke. Then, to Mr. Perkins: Naughty boy, mustn't get on the settee. She held the door open invitingly: Come on . . . take a walk outside, Toots.

Mr. Perkins understood. He trotted into the corridor and down the stairs into the street. The flats were not far from the Embankment and Mr. Perkins made his way there. The day was fine and there were a number of people leaning on the wall looking across the river. Now and again a hooter sounded as a string of barges passed. Mr. Perkins sat down, scratched himself happily, and trotted along in the direction of Blackfriars. There were few people here, but suddenly, just ahead, Mr. Perkins saw an Alsatian, sitting beside a pair of legs.

He went up to have a chat. Good morning, said Mr. Perkins, how's bones? The Alsatian did not answer.

—Sorry if I intrude, said Mr. Perkins, preparing to move on. —It's all right, said the Alsatian. I was just thinking. Didn't mean to be rude.

Mr. Perkins sat down. The Alsatian sat in silence, looking troubled. Mr. Perkins waited a moment. Can I help you? he said at last. I don't know, said the Alsatian. It's one of these human problems. . . .

—Ah, humans! Mr. Perkins was on familiar ground here. I know all about them, he said airily, cocking an ear. The Alsatian looked relieved. She nodded towards the legs. It's him, she said. I'm worried about him. He's been in a fight.

—Who's he been fighting?

—I don't know . . . somebody he called Jerry.

—Oh, said Mr. Perkins, he's a soldier. What's worrying you about this fight?

—Well, said the Alsatian, it's like this. Before he got in it he was like all humans . . . you know, living in one kennel with a bitch and a pup, and going to another kennel during the day for something or other . . .

—Work, explained Mr. Perkins.

—Well, whatever they call it. . . . Very cosy kennel we had. The man-pup used to go to a place they called a school . . . another kind of kennel, I expect. He lived there for weeks on end. We were all very happy. The b . . . (*Woman . . . said Mr. Perkins, irritably.*) All right, the woman. She looked after the kennel and there were plenty of bones. I gather that he—the Alsatian pointed a shiny black nose towards the legs—he was the bone-winner for the lot of us. He used to draw big kennels on pieces of paper. . . .

—An architect? said Mr. Perkins.

—I think that's what they call it. But he doesn't do it any more. The people who used to give him bones for it won't have him back. He can't see to draw any more. He's blind.

—Ah, said Mr. Perkins. I don't see how they could take him back, in that case.

—That's what he says, remarked the Alsatian. He says it's hard luck but it can't be helped . . . whatever that means. But it's tough on all of us. The woman has to go out now and work. We get a few bones for that. But it seems they have to pay bones to keep the man-pup in his school kennel. They were barking last night that he'd have to leave.

—Still, said Mr. Perkins comfortingly, your man will get a pension . . . I mean bones . . . because he was hurt while fighting.

—So I understand, said the Alsatian, but it's not one-tenth as many as he got for drawing. She paused. Tell me, which was more important for him to do—drawing or fighting?

—Fighting, said Mr. Perkins, promptly. He was helping to save his country from invasion . . . that would have meant no bones for all of us.

—But they didn't give him a lot of bones for fighting, said the Alsatian, puzzled. Has he saved his country from what you said?

—Yes.

—H'm. He gave up his bones to do it and now they don't give him as many as he lost.

—They couldn't, said Mr. Perkins. He's no use to the community now.

The Alsatian switched to Hermann's machine-gun debating tactics: What's "community"? she asked. *All the rest of the people here.* But why couldn't they give him as many as he lost? *Because if they gave more bones to those who can't work there wouldn't be*

so many for those who can. Would they mind that? *I'm afraid so.* What, although he'd saved them from having no bones at all? *Yes.* I heard him say once that he was fighting for a better world. When does it come? *In the future. He meant that he was fighting for a better world for his man-pup to live in.*

—Don't any of them think of having a better world now? *It would be too difficult.* More difficult than fighting and dying and being blinded and poor? *Much.* Why? *It would mean changing the system . . . the way they live.* Who made the system? *Men.* But this system doesn't prevent a fight, I gather. *No.* And if they fight and they die and they're blinded they end the fight but the system stays the same? *Yes.* Then, in the end they have another fight? *Yes.* And the man-pups who have grown up have to fight? *Yes.* Then they haven't made a better world for their man-pups to live in? *I suppose not,* said Mr. Perkins.

The Man turned away from the river and gave a light tug on the harness. The Alsatian moved ahead of him to the kerb and stopped there to let some cars pass. Mr. Perkins decided it was time *he* asked a question.

—Look here, he said to the Alsatian, Hermann . . . he's a friend of mine . . . says that any dog can always get a decent kennel if he wants. If you're not getting enough bones with him, why don't you get out and find a better place?

The Alsatian gave him a long look. I think I'll stay put, she said. I was trained to give people help when they need it, even if it means giving up a few bones. It may not be a human way of thinking, but it's sound dog-sense so far as I can see.

—I think you see very clearly, commented Mr. Perkins as he watched the two walk safely across the road. He turned . . . and found himself looking right into the pink eyes of a large bull-terrier with a flat and moronic forehead. He jumped.

—Windy? said the bull-terrier, lowering one eyelid. N-no. Not at all, lied Mr. Perkins, shakily.

—I'm Bill, said the bull-terrier, showing a row of long, sharp teeth. Got that? Go on—say it. And smile. Mr. Perkins did so.

—What's your name?

—Mr. Perkins hung his head, shamemuzzledly. Toots, he said, cursing Leila Honeybrooke inwardly.

—Toots! The bull-terrier gave a long, shrill squeal of derision.

What a name! No wonder you bark such nonsense. I've been listening to you. What's wrong with fighting, anyway? It's natural, isn't it? You've got to fight to show who's boss. Humans like doing it: I like doing it. See that stone you're standing on? It's mine. Get off it.

—No, said Mr. Perkins. I've as much right here as you.

—Good, snarled Bill. You asked for it.

Within a matter of seconds there was a crowd of men around the whirling, snapping, snarling bundle of fur and teeth.

—Why doesn't somebody stop them? cried a woman. You see, panted Mr. Perkins, getting his neck out of Bill's teeth, they don't like it. . . .

—Let 'em have it out, came a man's voice. Come on, the little 'un. . . .

—Satisfied? barked Bill, digging his teeth into Mr. Perkins's ear. Let me get at your throat . . . ah!

The cheering and shouting was louder. Someone was laying bets. Mr. Perkins was on his back, fighting grimly to avoid the dripping jaws and the big fangs. He looked up and saw the teeth getting nearer to his throat. Bill's face had a strange resemblance to the noble features of Lord Flushwater. Horrified, Mr. Perkins gave a quick wriggle, leaped back, turned and fled across the road and up Whitefriars Street. Bill's barking pursued them. . . . 'Course they like a fight, he was saying. Everybody does. It's nature.

Mr. Perkins dropped to a trot. He stopped a moment to lick his bites, and felt very sorry for himself. It was a human weakness: he needed sympathy. Mr. Perkins thought longingly of Leila Honeybrooke. Even this pleasant existence had its dangers and troubles.

Couldn't he let her know who he was? Impossible. Barking meant nothing to her. And if he could let her know in some way, what an embarrassment for a girl to find a terrier paying court!

Through the darkness of the autumn evening Mr. Perkins made his way gloomily and self-pityingly to the flat and scratched and whined at the door.

Miss Honeybrooke appeared in a dressing-gown. Come in, Toots, she said. Been fighting, eh? Well, it serves you right. She flicked out the light, went into her bedroom and closed the door. Mr. Perkins dropped wearily on the rug. No sympathy.

He thought sadly about his position. So far as he could see, he

was bound to go on being a dog for the rest of his days. What was wrong with that? asked the canine part of his consciousness.

Mr. Perkins reviewed the position. He was being fed and cared for. He had a comfortable home. He had everything that, as a reporter, he had dreamed of . . . security and leisure.

But it wasn't enough. Why wasn't it? Mr. Perkins groped in his mind for the rest of that human dream. He'd want leisure for some purpose, some great aim. . . .

He rose and padded gloomily round the room. It was dismal in the dark. He sniffed along the skirting-board until he found the switch of the standard lamp, pressed it down, blinked at the strong light and took stock of the room.

Someone had been there while he was out. There was a pipe on the round occasional-table and three-quarters of a glass of Guinness. A typewriter stood open, with a clean sheet of paper in the rollers, on the desk.

Evidently, the caller was unexpected . . . but welcome. A tear came into Mr. Perkins' eye and his ears dropped.

Ah, no! There could never be anything between him and Leila. Far better, thought Mr. Perkins, his mind reverting to more human and stereotyped ways of thinking, far better Go Out of Her Life For Ever. He felt his legs shaking and the need for a drink caused his tongue to dangle from the side of his muzzle. Mr. Perkins looked round for his saucer. It was empty. But . . . there was the Guinness, a favourite beverage of his human days.

Mr. Perkins hopped on to the arm of a chair and put his nose into the glass . . . and the level of the Guinness fell and fell. . . . Mr. Perkins sat in the chair and licked his lips.

Ah, that was good!

But the feeling did not last long. Mr. Perkins had overlooked one vital point: the capacity of a terrier for liquor is much less than that of a man. The effects were speedy. A wave of emotion came over him. He had to Give Up Leila. Poor Leila, she would never know of the love she had lost. Mr. Perkins gazed tearfully round the room . . . and received his hardest blow. There, on the settee, was a man's suit, neatly folded.

The sight rocked him . . . physically too, for the Guinness was now having its full effect. He tottered to the floor. No, poor Toots . . . he shuddered at the name . . . poor, faithful Toots wasn't

wanted any more. With that despairing jealousy that ever seeks to open its wounds still further, Mr. Perkins padded to the bedroom door and put his ear to it.

—Sleep well, darling, murmured a robust but tender voice.
And there was silence.

Dejected, cowed, unwanted, Mr. Perkins turned wearily away, went a little unsteadily to the easy-chair and lay down to weep. It was All Over. A medley of thoughts reeled through his mind, tenuously connected. . . . There was something about this dog life that had appealed to him. . . . Leisure . . . yes . . . time to do . . . to do what? What had he always wanted when he was a reporter? Leisure . . . leisure to write. That was it: to write. . . . Poor Toots. . . . Poor Leila . . . she would never know . . . leisure to write . . . Leila won't know . . . to write. . . . Something clicked in Mr. Perkins' fuddled brain. *Write.*

—Dogs can bark and dogs can bite
But dogs can't talk and dogs can't write . . .

he mumbled to himself. Can't write, eh! Why not? The thought took hold of Mr. Perkins's tipsy imagination.

—Go out of Leila's Life, he hiccupped hoarsely. Go 'way . . . live for Fame . . . no woman in life . . . make fortune. Mus' tell her. Can't write, eh? I got leisure. Write mas'rpiece.

He looked up at the parrot's cage, shrouded in a white cloth. You can't get out of your cage, said Mr. Perkins owlshly, but I can. Gonna say goo'bye to Leila . . . make fame an' forshun writin'.

He scrambled into the other chair by the desk and stood up with his forepaws in front of the typewriter. Rather hazily Mr. Perkins extended one paw, the keyboard seemed to swim a little before his eyes but he managed to get a toenail on to one of the keys. . . .

D . . .

Mr. Perkins gazed at the letter on the white paper with one eye, to steady things. Then, slowly, and with drunken caution, he began to spell out his last message. Sometimes the width of his paw brought down two impressions at once: sometimes he jammed the keys and had to free them with his teeth. But after two or three minutes he had produced something that was readable to human eyes . . .

Dedar lEla: i love youj. SO I8m goijng outof yourf lifes½
GOodbyh for efver. . . .

Mr. Perkins was so immersed in his task, the difficulty of which will be obvious to anyone, that he did not hear the click of the bedroom door.

A piercing scream brought him tumbling to the floor. Miss Honeybrooke was standing in the middle of the room. She was in her nightgown.

—Mus' calm Leila, said Mr. Perkins, regaining his feet and weaving a tortuous course towards her. Leila, ol' girl . . . itsh goo'-bye for ever. Don' cry. . . .

—I've gone mad! screamed Miss Honeybrooke (and who shall blame her?) retreating before Mr. Perkins, whose route cut her off from the bedroom.

—What's up? Hold on, Leila, I'm coming. It was the man's voice. Mr. Perkins drew himself up with dignity. I can see when I'm not wanted, he said. Sh'not for me to judge. . . .

Miss Honeybrooke darted in terror to the other door, opened it and sped screaming into the corridor.

With slow, determined, but unsteady gait, Mr. Perkins proceeded from the room and down the stairs. Already many footsteps were approaching. Human legs passed him hastily, going upwards. Human voices queried: Burglars . . . trouble upstairs . . . whatsa-matter? But human eyes did not notice the author of the Great Renunciation.

Behind him the rival for whom he had left the field was shepherding Miss Honeybrooke into the flat . . . assuring anxious and interested inquirers that it was just a nightmare.

Perhaps it was as well for the peace of Mr. Perkins' noble mind that he did not know the full effects of his action. Not only was Miss Honeybrooke's reputation lost but . . .

—Have a drink, darling . . . get it down. That's right. What was the matter?

—George . . . am I going mad? . . . Oh, am I going mad?

—Don't be silly, dear! No more hysterics. Now . . . tell me.

—It was . . . I was . . . I saw the dog . . . using the typewriter. . . .

—Darling had too much Scotch.—Manly laugh. Fresh floods of weeping from Miss Honeybrooke.

—I didn't . . . but I did see . . . oh, George, am I going mad, am I? More hysterics, less lovingly quelled. After all, George-darling was tired.—That's enough, Leila. Don't be silly. Now get up . . .

come on. It was a nightmare. Come on . . . I'll prove it. Come and look at the typewriter.

Pause. Squeal from Miss Honeybrooke. There . . . there, George, look! Typing! There was nothing on the paper. . . . I'd just put it in when you came. The dog was sitting up. . . . Oh, George, I can't bear it!

But George did not reply. He had the sheet of paper in his hand. His face was not so pleasant as that of an anxious lover should be.

—Typed in a hurry, he said coldly, but it's quite easy to make out what it says: "Dearest Leila: I love you, so I am going out of your life for ever." Who is this man? How many times has he been here?

—*George! . . . Darling . . . !*

—Don't "darling" me. . . . George was dressing. . . . I see what happened. He came here expecting to find you waiting for him . . . and saw you'd hooked another fish. Ha! Then you heard him typing and came out and screamed when you saw him. And you try to put me off with a cock-and-bull story like that!

—George. I saw it . . . I swear . . .

—I thought, said George righteously, ignoring his own position, that you were a decent girl. I thought you were different. It seems I was wrong.

—Oh, George . . . I know you can't believe me. . . . But it's true!

—Ha! snorted George, with that eternal exclamation of the unbelieving Just Man. He went to the door. I'm going, he said, rather unnecessarily. Thank you for a *very* entertaining evening. Here's ten shillings—shall I leave it on the table?

Sanity descended, briefly, on the tortured mind of Miss Honeybrooke. She hurled a vase of decaying chrysanthemums at the face in the doorway and registered a direct hit. The door slammed and locked, mercifully cutting off George's further remarks. Footsteps died away down the stairs.

Miss Honeybrooke collapsed on the settee. I'm going mad, she groaned. *I am* going mad! . . .

This explains why Miss Honeybrooke left town next day for a country nursing-home and with a firm resolve not to look at a newspaper during the whole time she was there . . . which was, perhaps, a pity. . . .

Mr. Perkins reached the pavement outside the flats. As so many unwise drinkers do, he had not allowed for the effects of fresh air. The pavement was rocking in a crazy way. Mr. Perkins regarded it gravely.

—Rough sea, he said finally, and proceeded on his undetermined way with a nautical roll. There were many confused thoughts in his brain.

The first one was this idea of writing. . . . Mr. Perkins did not know precisely what he meant to write. But it was to bring him fame. A later thought steadied him a little. He hadn't a typewriter . . . and who would give one to a dog, even if he could ask for one? Still (said the Guinness) he'd find a way to write. Can't keep a good dog down. Mr. Perkins hiccupped happily.

But when people see a dog writing they don't believe it. Mr. Perkins pondered this.

—Too educated, he said to himself. Mental proceshes too complex. Only shimple folk behold miracles. Clever ones seek explanations that don't exisht. I'll make 'em shее that it's true, brooded Mr. Perkins, swaying, reeling from his path and staggering into the road.

There was a scream of brakes. The big lorry stopped with a jerk. The driver's mate picked up the limp form of Mr. Perkins.

—Did we hit that tyke? queried the driver from his cab.

—Must ha' done. He's out. Might be dead. Not sure.

—Well, we don't want all the trouble o' reporting to th' police. Stick 'im in the cab. If he doesn't come round we can dump 'im somewhere in a ditch. Quick, before a bobby comes.

The other man pushed Mr. Perkins under the seat. He climbed in. —Think he *mus'* be dead, he commented. He was half right. Mr. Perkins *was* dead . . . drunk.

The lorry rolled on.

* * *

Mr. Perkins opened his eyes and shut them quickly. It felt as if someone was beating them with a hammer. He had one of the worst hangovers he'd ever experienced. He tried again . . . slowly. . . . From somewhere above came a faint glow and he was able to make

out two pairs of legs in front of him. The floor vibrated and he could hear the steady beat of a powerful engine.

—Better change down here, said a voice. Bad corner.

There was a movement near Mr. Perkins. The beat of the engine changed.

—Lorry, he thought. How did I get here? Lord, I must have been tight. . . . Mr. Perkins closed his eyes again and listened sleepily to the conversation over his head.

— . . . Italians'll get the right to choose the government they want. Badoglio's being fair enough, Joe. He says he's going to resign. He's a soldier, anyway, not a politician.

—I don't know. . . . This idea that generals and so on are just like privates and have to do what they're told . . . I don't think it's right. Now then, Bert. Look at Germany: it was the army big-wigs that planned the war. . . .

—On Hitler's orders.

—Not so fast, lad. There's a lot o' talk nowadays about the German generals getting rid of Hitler . . . seems his orders aren't so binding when they don't want to carry 'em out. Happen before long they'll be asking us for armistice terms. Then we'll find some of 'em collaborating with us—helping to keep order in their own country. . . .

—What's wrong with that?

—Well . . . doesn't it strike you that some of these blokes who say, "We're only soldiers" are a bloody sight better politicians than civilians?

—M'm . . . happen you're right, at that. Wonder what sort of a Government we'll get after the war?

Joe pondered a moment, then: I reckon the Conservatives'll try to get in on Churchill's popularity. They might do it, too.

—Nay, we'll never put the Tories in!

—Not if they play ball with the unions?

—They wouldn't be Conservatives, then!

—Wouldn't they? They'd be owt if they could hang on. You watch carefully . . . they might try to get the unions into partnership with big business. . . .

—That'd be good, wouldn't it?

—Very good . . . to get working chaps backing up the capitalist system!

—I don't get it. Why can't you leave politics to politicians? That's what they're there for.

—I was in t' last scrap.

—So was I. . . .

—When we come back we left it to 'em then, didn't we? We come back to homes fit for heroes to live in . . . or did we?

—Nay, Joe, it's no good bringing that up now. It's all past and forgotten.

—Then it didn't ought to be. I suppose we ought to forget the slump too, when there were plenty o' fowk with less food than everybody's getting to-day?

—Here, hold on. We're getting enough grub now—although we're in the middle of a war.

—You've got it wrong. We're getting enough food now *because* we're in a war. Got to have it provided or we can't go on. Seems it didn't matter in peace-time.

—Oh, Lord, groaned Mr. Perkins. Somebody else talking. They're always talking! The fumes of petrol and the effect of the drink set his head thumping like a steam-hammer. He whimpered in self-pity. But no one heard him.

—Chuck worrying, said Bert. You only get yourself upset, Joe. You'll change nowt if you think from now till doomsday. They'll never change t' government to please thee!

—That's just the trouble. If more ordinary chaps like us did think about things they'd have to change t' Government to suit us.

—And then you'd get what you want! Tell us what that is, Mister Prime Minister!

—I want a decent house, with the rent not too high. I want a fair wage and I'm prepared to work for it. I don't want owt for nowt. I want a bit o' garden, a bit o' spare time and a bit to spend on myself. I want the kids to have a decent schooling. I want to feel that as long as I can do my job it'll be there for me to do. I don't want to have to hoard money because I'm scared about what may happen next week or next year. I don't want any more war in my life or anybody else's life . . . even if we win it.

—Ah, that'd be grand! What about pensions?

—Help, yelled Mr. Perkins feebly. I'm going to be sick! Stop the lorry! Oh!

Joe double declutched, revving the engine as he changed down at another corner.

Mr. Perkins' cry was drowned. He shut his eyes and panted, his muzzle between his paws.

—Pensions? I've thought a lot about that, said Joe. I think a chap ought to be able to retire with enough to live on comfortably, if he's careful, at fifty-five, say. But I don't think a lot o' fowk think about retiring in the right way. . . .

—How do you mean?

—Well, they seem to have the idea that as soon as they retire, life's over . . . sort of sit back in a chair and have a rest until you cough out. I think it's wrong. I think there's a lot o' things they could do . . . and the country'd be a lot better for it and *they'd* be a lot better for it. You can't just put your feet up and shut the door and leave life outside, if you see what I mean. Here are people with time on their hands . . . time to do things. Mind, I think the rest of us are partly to blame, making 'em feel they're finished when they retire. But they're not.

—But what could they do?

—Well . . . suppose the old folk in a town got together, like. Most of 'em have reared children . . . wouldn't it be a good idea if a few of 'em sat each week, taking it in turns, in the children's courts? Don't you think we'd get fewer of them harsh sentences we've been reading about if ordinary folk, who've brought their children up themselves, were able to sit on the bench?

—It's an idea. . . .

—Aye. Then again: there'll always be pensioners in need, with illness and so on. Well, if there's public funds to be administered, couldn't it be done through an old folks' association? I mean, it wouldn't be so official. Sort of, well, suppose you were ill and a chap about your own age came round to see you . . . probably brought up in your own street. You'd have things to talk about. And you'd know he wasn't much better off than yourself. . . . I mean, you wouldn't feel you were getting charity, would you? There's all sorts of things . . . well, look, did you ever have a row with the wife . . . ?

—Many a time, lad, till we got settled. Who doesn't?

—Well, look at these young couples who go rushing to court to get separations. Magistrates who don't know anything about their

difficulties . . . Wouldn't it be a good thing if the old folks provided a sort of panel to hear such cases and give some advice . . . from their own experience?

—I don't know. . . . I don't think the young 'uns would listen. . . .

—I think they'd be more likely to listen to people whose lives were like their own. . . .

—Maybe. Who's going to start this idea of yours?

—Happen I'll do it myself, Bert, some day. I've thought a lot about it. If I ever retire I'm going to start to live, not to die. I'll tell you one thing I'm going to do . . . I'm going to learn something. Soon as I've drawn my last pay packet I'm going to night-school!

—What! With a lot o' kids? They will laugh at you!

—Let 'em. . . . I've been laughed at before. But I don't think they will. . . . It's not that youngsters are hard, you know, lad. They're frightened o' being thought soft.

—Hope they make a better job o' life than we did.

—They will . . . if we help 'em. For Christ's sake, stop talking as if you were dead . . . !

—Funny. We all seem to think that way. Still, can't teach an old dog new tricks.

—No harm in trying.

—M'm. . . . This night-school business. What'll you learn? French? Why? D'you want to go to France?

—I'd like to, but I reckon I won't be able to afford it.

—Then what's the good o' learning French?

—It'd be interesting.

—Hell! But it won't do you any good.

—I once learned to use a machine-gun. Has that done me any good? Or anybody else?

—Now don't come back to politics, for God's sake!

—I've got to come back to politics. We've all got to come back to politics. We've got to think about the way we're governed, but we've got to do more—we've got to think about the way other countries are governed. You may have the most peaceable government in the world—like the Danes and Norwegians—but it won't save you from war if there are warlike governments outside. We've got to have something like a League of Nations and we've got to

make it work this time . . . you and me and ordinary chaps all over the world.

—We'd have a job on. No, you'll never see it in your lifetime, so why bother your head about it?

—If somebody doesn't bother their head about it, there'll be another war in twenty years.

—We'll be dead by then, lad.

—Aye . . . and nothing to show for having lived.

—For the Lord's sake, yelled Mr. Perkins, feeling the pangs again, stop this lorry and let a chap get out!

—Listen! That blessed dog. I'd forgotten . . . he must ha' come round. Here, boy. . . .

A hand reached under the seat. Mr. Perkins gave it a weak lick and found himself lifted out and plumped on the cushion between the two men. The cool air blew in through the flapping side-curtain. He began to feel better.

—Well, he doesn't look too bad. Bit seedy, but no bones broken, so far as I can see.

—Seems to be a stray. What'll we do with him?

—We can take him along . . . when we got back to London we could drop him about the same place.

—Might keep him.

—M'm . . . might.

The lorry rounded a corner. Ahead, on the near side, gleamed a number of red rear-lamps. Pull up at Mack's, said Bert. The lorry slowed, swerved off the road and stopped outside a long wooden hut. The men got out. . . .

—Come on, boy.

Mr. Perkins came down from the cab gingerly. His head was still aching, but it was not too bad. He followed the men, blinking as they entered the brightly-lit room. It was apparently an old army hut. There were about a dozen marble-topped tables on iron legs, with bentwood chairs around them. At the far end was a counter with ready-cut sandwiches in piles in glass cases, a chromium tea-urn and, behind, rows of shelves stacked with paper packets of cigarettes.

A plump and cheerful girl with very fair hair showing brown at the roots called a greeting to Mr. Perkins' friends as they found a table. Bert went over to her and returned with two mugs of tea,

then he and Joe pulled paper packets from their coat pockets and began to untie the string. Mr. Perkins, sitting on the floor, gave an anxious whimper.

—In a minute, said Bert. Think you can eat Spam?

—Yap-yap, barked Mr. Perkins. Not half.

—He's heard that word before, chuckled Joe.

Mr. Perkins jumped up on a chair, put his head on one side, lifted an ear and let his tongue slide sideways from his mouth. Almost at once Bert held out to him a quarter of a sandwich. Mr. Perkins gave one sniff. It was Spam. Mr. Perkins took it between his teeth, gave one gulp. It was gone. He hung out his tongue again, and looked eagerly at Bert.

—Christ! Give a chap a chance! said Bert.

Joe poured some tea in his saucer and pushed it before Mr. Perkins. Have a drink, he said.

Mr. Perkins needed no second invitation. He stuck his tongue into the saucer, scalded it, whimpered, drew back his head with a jerk. The men laughed. Mr. Perkins tried again. Between a series of gulps and whimpers of annoyance the tea gradually disappeared.

Joe gave him a sandwich.

—Expensive, keeping a dog, said Joe. Better get some more grub. He went over to the counter. Meanwhile, Mr. Perkins put a paw on the edge of the table, looked appealingly at Bert—and got another sandwich. Hermann's training was standing him in good stead. Joe returned with another man.

—I'll show you where to go, Joe was saying, as they both sat down. He pulled out a newspaper from his pocket, laid it on the table and began to pencil a rough map in the blank space of the stop-press column. Mr. Perkins looked on with interest.

—Here's the main road, said Joe. Here's Mack's place, where we are now. Turn off to the left—here: that'll take you straight to Wakefield. You come up by the county council offices—here, and then straight along the Bradford road. When you hit the tramlines by the cemetery look out for a pub called the Engineers and turn right. That'll bring you to the fact'ry.

—Thanks a lot. The other man lit a cigarette. They began to talk of different journeys they had made. Mr. Perkins listened disinterestedly. He felt warm inside and the tea had taken away his headache. No one was paying any attention to him. He craned his

head forward and gently took up the pencil between his teeth. As he drew back again he kept the point of the pencil on the table-top and saw with pleasure that it made quite a distinct mark. Mr. Perkins turned his head this way and that and described a few shaky arabesques. This was fun. He continued.

Suddenly he was aware of a silence. He lifted his eyes. Bert was signalling to the others and pointing to the table.

—Ever see a dog do that before? said Bert.

—He's doodling, exclaimed the other man.

—Aye, said Joe, with a wink at his mate, but that's not all he does. He makes out all the waybills for us. . . .

—Come off it!

—Fact. And last week he wrote to the boss and got me a rise!

There was a burst of laughter. Mr. Perkins bent his head again. A spirit of devilment had seized him. Slowly, very slowly, for it is difficult to write with a pencil held in your teeth, he began to draw in bold capital letters . . .

HELL . . .

Bert was the first to notice that he was doing something different. He looked at Joe. Hey, he said, that dog *is* writing.

—Go on!

—Well, look . . . them's letters, aren't they?

Mr. Perkins finished. He sat back, holding the pencil, and looked at the three men in turn. They craned forward, twisting their heads this way and that.

—They are an' all. . . .

—Boloney, said the other man as they all stood and came round to Mr. Perkins's side of the table. Then, suddenly: 'Strewth . . . look! There was no doubt about it. The letters were quite clear. . . .

HELLO JOE!

Bert and Joe drew back . . . the third man patted Mr. Perkins' head. Dam' clever, he said. How long did it take you to train him? Why, what's up?

The other men in the room had by now gathered round the table.

—I didn't train him, said Joe in a weak voice. I dunno how he picked it up . . . maybe the chap who had him before.

—You got a fortune in that dog.

—Aye, chuck this job and take him on the stage.

—Or Hollywood!

—Films! That's it. Make you a fortune.

—Happen he would, said Bert, but here's the trouble . . . we don't know what to say to make him write. I expect he'd be trained to put down certain words, like, on certain commands. I wish we knew 'em!

—That's right, said Joe. I mean, it's only a dog . . . it won't know what it's writing down, will it? Look out, it's off again!

Mr. Perkins was. Amid a tense silence he began to write, all the men spelling out the words as he wrote them.

I . . . KNOW . . . WHAT . . . YOU . . . SAY . . . repeated the chorus. It's queer . . . whispered someone, uneasily. Dam' queer said another. There was a silence for a few seconds.

—That's the sort o' thing they would teach it to write, said Bert, reassuringly. Let's think o' something unusual. . . . Dam' it, dogs don't know what you say. How can they?

—What'll we ask it? . . . I dunno. . . . Well, think o' something. . . . Aye, but what?

The whispered discussion went on. Mr. Perkins was thinking. If he could only convince people that he could understand them and could write, what a future lay before him! The only writing dog in the world!

There would be competition for his services. After all, Fleet Street doesn't care so much what is written as who writes it. Mr. Perkins remembered the *Daily Wire*, which paid a retired general around seventy guineas a week to write articles on military strategy which events consistently proved to be wrong. A staff man would have got five guineas each for the same length of material—and he'd have been expected to get a good deal nearer the truth.

But a dog feature-writer! Mr. Perkins thrilled at the thought. He visualized the articles he would write. . . . Life Among the Dogs . . . A Dog Looks at Democracy . . . Whither Germany? By a Dog Refugee . . . Husbands off the Leash (for the Women's Page). . . . And then, one day, a monumental book, a classic, to teach people and dogs to fraternize. He would call it Basic Barkage. Then he'd be invited to sit on a commission by Mr. Churchill.

The future was bright, but . . . and here Mr. Perkins thought hard: how to convince people that he could write? He had great faith in the ordinary man's simple acceptance of the remarkable . . . after all, he thought, look at the growing numbers of spiritualists.

Why not tell these people that he was a man and not really a dog? Ah, that was a big bone to swallow! Would they believe him? Should he try it? Mr. Perkins hesitated.

The whispering stopped.

Bert gingerly pushed a large silver watch in front of Mr. Perkins' shiny nose.

—Hey, Dog, he said, with a rather breathless respect, what time is it?

Mr. Perkins obligingly wrote down—I.25. Voices chorused: He's right! . . . He's doing some more. . . . Mr. Perkins added the letters "a.m."

—Christ! said a tall man. Bloody marvellous, said his mate. Bloody queer, said the man who had made the remark before. There was a whispered chorus. I'm going . . .! What's up, Jack? . . . I don't like it.

—I don't either. It was the girl from behind the counter. Get it out of here, she said tremulously. Nobody moved.

Mr. Perkins gave the girl a nasty look and began to write again. The crowd moved further back. Bert craned his head, screwed up his eyes, and spelled out the words as Mr. Perkins laboriously wrote them down. . . .

SHE'S . . . DYED . . . HER . . . HAIR.

The girl gave a choking cry and ran behind the counter.

—Get that dog out of here!

—Go on, Joe . . . she'll throw a fit in a minute.

—It's not my dog, said Joe, shakily.

—I'll call the police! squeaked the girl.

Mr. Perkins decided to risk all. He began to write again. . . .

—Go on, Bert, what is it? . . . I can't see. . . . Well go and look. . . . Go yourself. . . . You brought it here. . . . I didn't. It followed us. . . . What, from London!

Mr. Perkins had finished. But it seemed no one dared to come and read the message.

—Look out!

The crowd scuffled back hastily as Mr. Perkins jumped from the chair. He walked in a leisurely way to another table, sat on the floor and looked at them all invitingly.

—Go on, Bert. He wants you to look. Bert took a frightened step forward, then another. Well, what's it say?

—It says, "I'M NOT A DOG." . . .

—Not a dog, whispered the voices.

Bert read on: "I'M . . . A . . . MAN . . . WHO . . . WAS . . . KILLED."

Nobody spoke. Faces turned to one another, first inquiringly, then fearfully. Mr. Perkins saw what was coming. He had seen panic grow among a crowd before. His experiment was no use. Nobody would believe him. . . .

The crowd began to edge round behind the tables, keeping as far away from him as they could. From behind the counter he heard the sound of the telephone dial being turned. Fury came upon Mr. Perkins like a red wave. He stood up, then put his head down and glowered at the men, turning back his lips to show his fangs. . . .

—Grrr . . . r, growled Mr. Perkins. You fools! All right, get out! Run away from me. I'll have that satisfaction, anyway!

—It's coming for us! . . . Get out!

There were shouts, a mad rush of feet, tables overturned. Mr. Perkins went barking in pursuit. . . .

—Slam the door!

—Help . . . police . . . help . . . mad dog! It was the girl behind the counter. . . .

The door slammed and bounced open again. Mr. Perkins ran to it and edged it further open with his nose. From outside came the roar and cough of starting engines. As he looked out, headlights swung round and slid down the Great North Road. The red gleam of tail-lamps passed in front of him and vanished into the darkness like a procession of falling stars, fading with the sound of pulsing motors into the distance.

—Bah! yapped Mr. Perkins, and turned back into the room.

—Help, help, help, screamed the girl, frantically rattling the receiver.

—Bah! growled Mr. Perkins again. He stood and surveyed her for a moment: You're as bad as Leila Honeybrooke.

He jumped on a chair and demolished a sandwich that someone had left. Dunno when I'll get another meal, he said to himself and passed on to a further table for a drink of cold tea. Oh, shut up . . . ! The girl was still screeching.

The sound of a distant engine came to his ears. Mr. Perkins cocked them up from sheer force of habit. Not a lorry, he said to himself. Car . . . must be the police. M'm. Now what do I do?

How could he convince people that writing was quite a normal accomplishment for him? Mr. Perkins thought. There was a chance . . . if he could get something about his ability into the papers. But how? Yes . . . it might be done. But if he failed? The alternative was . . . ! Mr. Perkins shuddered.

The car was drawing nearer, its headlamps gleaming intermittently through the bare hedgerow. He hadn't much time to make up his mind.

Mr. Perkins hesitated a moment, then he decided. He jumped down the steps and scurried round the corner of the hut as the car swung into the parking space and stopped with a jerk.

* * *

Conversation in a café:

—Now, calm down, lass, an' let's have it from thread to needle, while I take it down. "About 12.30 a.m. two men entered the premises with a dog. . . . I recognized them as lorry drivers. . . ." Know their names?

—Bert and Joe.

—Bert and Joe what?

—I don't know . . . why don't you *do* something instead of pestering me? It might be somewhere round about. Why don't you catch it?

—Catch what?

—The dog, you fool.

—Don't call the officer a fool, young woman, said the Sergeant. And don't obstruct him in the execution of his duty, see? Just answer his questions. Carry on, Higginbottom.

—"Recognized them as lorry drivers called Bert and Joe. Do not know their other names." Who do they drive for?

—Hay's Wharf Cartage Company, London.

—Ah. Right. Now what did they do?

—Sat down at a table and had a cup o' tea and a sandwich . . . each.

—"They sat down and had two sandwiches . . . one each apiece. And tea," Now . . . about this dog.

—What sort of a dog was it? asked the Sergeant.

—Oh, it was terrible . . . terrible. . . . It sat down there, at that table . . . on a chair. It sat there and said it was a dead man.

P.C. Higginbottom closed his book, tapped his teeth with his pencil and looked at the Sergeant. The Sergeant looked at the girl and at P.C. Higginbottom, tapped his head and made little circles with his forefinger.

—Don't you do that to me, Syd Hardcastle! I'm not crazy. *Oh, no! You've only seen a talking dog, that's all. There's thousands of 'em about. Thousands.* Well, it didn't exactly talk. *Ah.* But it wrote a lot of things on that table. *I suppose it had a fountain-pen in its pocket!* No—it held a pencil in its teeth. *I don't know what you think you're up to, lass, but . . .* Well, come and look . . . see there! Writing! *Who done this?* The dog. *It didn't ask you for a stamp, did it?* Why? *To send a letter to the looney bin. I've had enough o' this bunkum. Come on back, Higginbottom. . . .*

—You can't leave me here . . . I'll go mad! I'll go mad! It might come back and start writing things and barking at me again!

The policemen looked at one another.

—All right . . . lock the place up and come back with us. We'll get the doctor to look at you. . . . Dogs writing on tables! Ha! Come on. . . .

The girl went meekly. The lights were put out, the door locked. The policeman got into the driving-seat of the car, the Sergeant beside him. The girl huddled in the back.

—There's a rug there, if you feel cold.

—I'm all right.

The car moved away. Underneath the rug on the back seat Mr. Perkins chuckled to himself.

* * *

—There's no doubt about it, said the doctor, the girl's had a very bad shock of some kind. Was there any writing on the table, by the way?

—Yes . . . a lot of scribble.

—I tell you I saw it do it.

—That's all right, Miss Swayles, said the doctor. Don't get upset. Where were you at the time?

—I was close to it . . . with the men.

—Did you actually see it writing the words?

—Not exactly. I saw it moving its head and holding the pencil in its mouth. The men told me what it had written.

—Ah! Then they might have written it themselves. It might have been a joke on their part.

—But why did they all run away . . . ?

—Well, you said it seemed to get savage all of a sudden.

—I dunno, said the Sergeant, this dam' dog's caused a lot of trouble.

—They ought to be summonsed, said Miss Swayles, viciously. Can I go now?

—If you feel all right. . . .

Miss Swayles got up and walked to the door. She opened it.

—Thanks! barked Mr. Perkins and slipped through into the room. The Dog! screamed Miss Swayles, and shot, squealing, into the grey dawn.

Inside the room there was a tense silence. The doctor edged back towards the wall, lifting his umbrella. The Sergeant and the policeman exchanged looks, inviting each other to be the first to move.

Only Mr. Perkins was calm and composed. He walked slowly forward to the middle of the room by the anthracite stove, sat down, looked round and then gazed through the mica window at the glow within. So that's him! whispered the Sergeant.

The doctor came forward a little.

—Seems a harmless little beast. He bent down and cautiously patted Mr. Perkins on the head. Nice dog . . . good dog, then. Mr. Perkins slowly lifted his head and licked the doctor's hand.

—See, he's all right. . . . I wonder what scared her?

The Sergeant looked at the policeman, who was fumbling quietly in a drawer, and winked. The policeman winked in return, but Mr. Perkins didn't see that. P.C. Higginbottom walked across. Good boy, he said, and stooped over Mr. Perkins. Then: Gottim!

Before Mr. Perkins could move, the constable's other hand had come from behind his back and a muzzle was clapped over Mr.

Perkins' mouth and fastened on. A loop of strong cord was round his neck . . . and P.C. Higginbottom had the other end.

Mr. Perkins jumped and rolled and growled in fury—but every leap drew the slip-knot closer. He was choking. At last he gave it up and lay on the ground, whimpering. The constable loosed the slip-knot a little. Any more tricks, he said, and you know what'll happen.

—What did you do that for? asked the doctor . . . he hasn't tried to bite anyone.

—If the girl's to be believed, answered the Sergeant, he has sudden fits and attacks people. Can't take any chances. Besides, we've got a case, now.

—Failing to keep a dangerous dog under control, said P.C. Higginbottom, happily. Putting His Majesty's subjects in fear . . .

—And you never know, said the Sergeant, they might have no licence for him, I shouldn't be surprised. They might even have pinched him . . . though God knows why, he added, looking disparagingly at Mr. Perkins.

—In any case, one o' the charges'll stick, said P.C. Higginbottom, so that's O.K. Where'll I put him? We haven't got a kennel or anything.

—He'll have to go in the cell, like he was a human being, grunted the Sergeant.

—Right. Come on. P.C. Higginbottom dragged the whimpering Mr. Perkins away.

—Poor little beggar, said the doctor, as they passed. What d'you suppose'll happen to him? *

—I dunno, answered P.C. Higginbottom. Bench'll probably order him to be destroyed.

Mr. Perkins shuddered. This was not the end he had hoped for, although he had envisaged the possibility when he took the chance. He had thought that the evidence of the writing on the table would lead the policemen, if a little shamefacedly, to give him a pencil and a sheet of paper to see if he could write.

P.C. Higginbottom dragged the reluctant Mr. Perkins into the cell, pulled a blanket from the plank bed to the floor and slipped the cord from his neck. Then, with surprising agility, the constable leaped backwards out of the door and slammed it.

Bert and Joe had already discussed their defence as they drove up to Throppleton to attend the court.

Obviously they could not disclose that they had kidnapped Mr. Perkins, believing him to be dead or injured—for it is an offence not to report an accident. But it is also an offence to keep a dog without a licence. They decided that the only thing to say was that the stray had attached himself to them.

—And, said Joe, I'll say I was going to take out a licence soon as I got chance.

—But what about this writing business?

—We'll have to tell 'em the truth.

—They won't believe us.

—But a dozen other chaps saw it!

—Aye, but they won't admit it, now. They all say it were some trick we were up to.

—Happen we'd better say nowt.

—Aye.

But things turned out differently. The case proceeded in the customary way . . . Defendants had arrived at a café with The Dog (Mr. Perkins, a kind of despondent Exhibit A, stood beside P.C. Higginbottom, facing the magistrates) and after some larking, they had run out of the café when The Dog suddenly became savage, leaving Miss Swayles fastened in with the dangerous animal. She then called the police.

Mr. Sam Hardcastle, the magistrate and local butcher, called Miss Swayles back as she was leaving the witness box.

—This larking about, he said. What exactly went on before this dog suddenly became savage? Were these chaps trying to, er, interfere with you at all?

It was Mr. Hardcastle's conviction that there were "goings on" at any place where both sexes were gathered together, particularly after ten o'clock in the evening. Miss Swayles tossed her head. They said that dog was writing things about me on the table, she said.

—What!

—Yes . . . then they pretended to get scared of it and ran out.

—What sort of things were written on the table? Obscene things, I suppose? Miss Swayles didn't know what "obscene" meant, so she answered: Yes.

—Ah! You can step down, Mr. Hardcastle turned to Joe. Not

only do you terrify this poor girl, he said, but you damage property in this cafe, by defacing the tables. Also, you write obscene matter in a public place. This is becoming varry serious, you know. What have you to say about it?

Joe had to take the plunge. We didn't write anything, sir. It was the dog.

—Nonsense.

—But it was, sir. It was, really.

—I suppose you know that perjury's a serious offence, a varry serious offence?

—Yes, sir.

—I'll give you one more chance. Do you still stick to this ridiculous story?

—Yes, sir.

—Varry well. Officer, tak' the muzzle off that dog and . . . What did it write with?

—A pencil, sir.

—Give it a pencil. You've got some paper, Mr. Osbaldiston?

The Clerk pushed a sheet of ruled paper across the solicitors' desk. P.C. Higginbottom, keeping a tight hold on the cord around Mr. Perkins' neck, gingerly removed the muzzle. Mr. Perkins at once jumped on to the nearest chair. P.C. Higginbottom held out a pencil, keeping a wary eye on Mr. Perkins, who eyed him sourly but took the pencil daintily in his teeth.

Mr. Hardcastle gripped his lapels, stuck out his chest judicially and sat back with a superior smile. The reporter from the *Doncaster and Throppleton Intelligencer* leaned forward in the Press box. This had begun to look like a story. Now! said Mr. Hardcastle.

Mr. Perkins looked long at Joe and Bert, the men who had run out on him. He was half inclined to write nothing at all. But then . . . they'd said he was a stray. Mr. Hardcastle was quite capable of having him destroyed as a stray. Carefully, Mr. Perkins brought the point of the pencil on to the paper and began clumsily to move it.

—By gum! said Mr. Hardcastle, staring down in bewilderment. P.C. Higginbottom's jaw dropped. Joe closed his eyes and breathed deeply with relief. Slowly and laboriously Mr. Perkins worked the pencil along, in a deep silence. Then he lifted his head and looked at Mr. Hardcastle.

—Looks like he's finished, said that gentleman. What's on the paper, Higginbottom? Just scribble?

Mr. Perkins put a paw on the paper and pushed it sideways within reach of the constable, who picked it up timidly.

—Yes, sir . . . I mean, no sir, said P.C. Higginbottom. My God!

—Higginbottom!

—Sorry, sir . . . yes, sir . . . it . . . it's words, sir. Looks like poytry!

—Read it out, then.

And P.C. Higginbottom began. . . .

*"I have written these words, as you see—
A task that is easy for me.
I admit it's no fun
But it had to be done . . .
To conv . . ."*

Do I have to go on, sir? pleaded the constable. Oh, all right, sir. . . . Hr'rm. . . .

*"I have written these words, as you see—
A task that is easy for me.
I admit it's no fun
But it had to be done
To convince a pig-headed J.P."*

There was a roar of laughter. The reporter scribbled busily. Mr. Hardcastle thumped on the bench. P.C. Higginbottom roared for order. Gradually the noise died down.

—Any more of this, said Mr. Hardcastle, very red in the face, and I'll have the court cleared. He turned to Joe and Bert. You taught this animal to do this, he declared. I won't be trifled with. You've come to the wrong place. This is contempt of court. I find you both, as joint owners, guilty of having a dog without a licence—fined one pound. For failing to keep a dangerous dog under control—fine five pounds. For causing wilful damage in a public restaurant—two pounds. And for contempt of court you'll go to the cells until you apologize. Mr. Hardcastle puffed out his cheeks. As for the dog . . .

Mr. Perkins looked up at him.

...I shall make an order for it to be destroyed, said Mr. Hardcastle. That did it. Mr. Perkins' lips curled back from his teeth.

—You silly old fool! You pompous ass, he barked furiously. You won't even believe your own senses. . . . I wish I could get my paws on you for one minute. . . .

Mr. Perkins leaped on the table. The Clerk sprang from his chair, jumped back, missed his footing and went head first down the steps. Mr. Hardcastle shouted. Seize that dog, Higginbottom!

But P.C. Higginbottom jumped for the side exit. From the dock, Joe and Bert joined in with shouts of Sick 'em, boy . . . chew him up! The court was in an uproar.

Mr. Perkins, with one last defiant bark, jumped from the table and dashed for the door. The constable on duty outside opened it to find out what all the row was about.

There was a yell from him as Mr. Perkins, an angry mass of fur and teeth, shot between his legs, down the steps of the Town Hall and was lost to view among the traffic of the High Street.

Hardly had the constable recovered when the door was flung wide open and a youthful figure swept out, took the flight of steps in one leap and vanished, panting, into the post-office.

It was the reporter from the *Doncaster and Throppleton Intelligencer*, about to wire his first story to a national newspaper.

He addressed it to the *Daily Monitor*, Manchester office . . . and went home to dream of cheques.

* * *

It could never be said of Christmas Zipp, editor of the *Daily Monitor*, that he ever told his staff to do anything he couldn't do himself.

He could sub-edit a story, put heads on it and display it better than any of them—and the proof that he was better is that whenever he did sub-edit a story it got a first-rate show in the paper. He saw to that.

To-night Zipp was looking over the proofs.

—This dog story, he said to the chief sub-editor. Lousy heads

... "Dog Writes Limerick in Court." Here's the line: "POET DOG SETS COURT AGOG!" Shove than on.

—It's a bit short for 24 point, said the chief sub, diffidently.

—It's too good a story for 24 point, returned Zipp. Put 'em in 42 point . . . five lines single column. And give it a good show.

—I don't think "COURT" will go in 42 point, said the chief sub, looking at the type chart.

—Then shave the end of the line—or put it down a size. Type was made for man, not man for type.

—Type was made for editors, muttered the chief sub under his breath. Zipp's secretary came up: His Lordship's on the phone, sir.

—Right. I'll take it here. . . . Zipp walked over to a phone and asked for the call to be transferred. His Lordship's voice was clear and strong. It always was. Zipp held the receiver a few inches from his ear.

—Hello, Zipp. That you? Say . . . this dog story. What's it all about?

—Oh, a coupla chaps taught a dog to write, apparently. . . . trained it to spell out rude limericks about magistrates. Well, they were had up because the dog turned dangerous and they let it write some of this stuff in court. Dog was ordered to be destroyed but it escaped.

—Have you found it?

—What, Chief?

—Have you found the dog, Zipp? Whaddya think I meant? You haven't? Well, get on it right away. Don't ya see the angle . . . "Writing Dog Writes for *Daily Monitor*"? Eh? . . .

—Yeah, Chief, but you don't suppose the dog really writes—except what it's taught to write, do you?

—Don't you suppose what I suppose, Zipp . . . !

—Sorry, Chief.

—You getta holt o' this dog—I'll tell it what to write. Get the idea? Dog goes everywhere, sees everything. Nobody sees dog. What's it think about life, about yumanity, Zipp, eh? It's a winner . . . "Dog Says Remove Controls on Industry" . . . "More Co-ops, Fewer Bones, Says Dog" . . . "Farm Dogs Plump for Higher Subsidies" . . . "What does the LITTLE Dog think?" Get me? We gotta policy, we got campaigns. Here's the way to get the public to read 'em.

—That's great, Chief. Don't know where you get these ideas.

—I gotta headpiece on me, Zipp. I got faith in the Almighty to give me ideas. Ask and it shall be given unto you. Read your Bible, Zipp. . . .

—Yes, Chief.

. . . so long as you skip that bit about giving your coat to the needy. That's not business. Encourages laziness. Anyhow . . . get that dog. . . .

—I'll try, Chief.

—Trying's not enough. Get it. Offer a reward. That's the way . . . five hundred pounds to start with. Where're you running this story?

—Page Three lead, Chief.

—Put it on Page One.

—What about this story on trouble in the Lebanon?

—Aw, put it inside. Politics. Nob'dy reads politics.

—O.K., Chief. Say, Chief . . . But Lord Flushwater had hung up. Zipp turned to the chief sub.

—I've just been telling His Lordship—and he agrees—that you're under-playing this story. Whoop it up. Double column intro. And put it on Page One in place of the Lebanon tripe. Zipp departed.

—Hey, Joe, said the Chief Sub, come here. This won't do.

—Thought you liked it?

—Naw. Not enough punch. Snap it up. Do it big. And for God's sake, don't gimme such stodgy heads. "Dog Writes Limerick in Court." That's no good. Make it "Poet Dog Sets Court Agog".

—Oh, dam' good!

—Yeah, not bad—though I ses it meself.

* * *

It was dark in the barn, except for a pale circle of moonlight, shining through a hole in the roof, which silvered the tips of Mr. Perkins' paws.

He had run throughout the day, dodging across fields, through thickets . . . keeping parallel to but always away from the main London road. Now, tired out, he dozed: sick of humanity and its lack of imagination and belief.

A faint squeak caused him to open one eye. Just inside the circle of light, at a respectful distance from him, sat a large comfortable-looking rat and . . . Mr. Perkins opened the other eye . . . it had a tiny piece of paper clutched in one paw. Mr. Perkins lifted his head and blinked and the rat edged back a little.

—Don't worry, barked Mr. Perkins hoarsely. I'm not interested in chasing you. . . .

—That's very kind of you, squeaked the rat, coming back into the light. It makes my task much easier. Would you mind reading this? Afterwards, I shall be happy to discuss it with you.

"This" was the tiny piece of paper. Advancing with some trepidation, the rat laid the tiny triangle at Mr. Perkins's paws and went back to his post on the fringe of the darkness.

Mr. Perkins looked at the paper. There was some inscription on it in very fine and delicate characters. What was more surprising, he found he could read it. Good heavens! said Mr. Perkins, I didn't know you could write.

—It was a very long and arduous business to learn, said the rat, in a self-satisfied way. One reads the papers, one formulates opinions. One desires to express them. Yes?

—H'm, said Mr. Perkins.

—I'm rather literary, answered the rat. One of the establishments which I visit from time to time is a wholesale newsagents. I found it gave quite a flavour to one's meal to know what was in it, especially in these days of war-time dishes. I began to experiment. Instead of making a meal entirely off the *Spectator* . . . wholesome but rather stodgy . . . I took to varying it with a few nibbles of *Everybody's* or *Esquire*. Very piquant. However, that is neither in one hole nor out of the other. The fact remains that, enjoying reading, I taught myself to write. As a result, my colleagues entrusted me with the task of approaching the Dog Fraternity in the hope of . . . but perhaps you had better read our manifesto. . . .

—Certainly, said Mr. Perkins, puzzled but polite. He screwed up his eyes to make out the writing on the paper. It was headed:

MISSION TO THE DOGS

Do you know?—
The Great Rat is the
Father of All. His ways
are Peace and his halls
are the halls of Plenty.

*For further Information
See Small Pawbills.*

—I regret there are no small pawbills—yet, said the rat as Mr. Perkins mumbled his way to the end of the notice. I haven't had time to do them. But perhaps I can enlighten you as to our aims. . . .

—By all means do so, said Mr. Perkins, interested.

The rat came forward. He sat on his haunches, laid his forepaws across his pale stomach and began:

—Far, far away, he said, slowly and carefully, in a land where Liverpool virus and poison gas and traps and—pardon me, dogs—are unknown, there lives the Great Rat, the father of all rats. He fills the warehouses of the world with grain and with paper; he it is who sends the bones and the scraps to the dustbins and provides a world of plenty for us.

He it is whom we worship and when good rats pass away they are taken to his land, to live for ever in palaces of cheese which never grow less, however much they are nibbled. His greatest wish is that we should all live in happiness and peace. Now, what makes this impossible? . . .

Mr. Perkins blinked. Well, he said, as far as you are concerned—humans, and dogs and cats, I should think.

—I regret that you are right, sighed the rat. And yet there is enough in the world for all of us, is there not?

—Agreed, said Mr. Perkins.

—Then will you not join the fellowship of the Great Rat, the giver of plenty, and let us all be friends and at peace? I assure you we have a civilization which has much to give. For instance, our underground communication system is a marvel of engineering . . . our Marine College has brought to a fine art the various systems of getting off sinking ships. . . . We are not a backward race, you know.

—I quite agree, said Mr. Perkins. The only difficulty is . . .

—Ah, said the rat, I thought there would be a snag. What is it?

—Well, said Mr. Perkins, dogs have a similar belief to yours. They believe that the Big Dog is the giver of all and that his aim is that we should all seek and find happiness together. . . .

—Do you know anything about the cats? asked the rat, rather anxiously.

—They believe in Big Tom. His aims are the same.

—And the humans?

—They also believe that one of their own kind is above them all and believes in all men living together in peace.

—But they fight among themselves more than we do, commented the rat, although the difference between them is less than the difference between us!

—Yes, said Mr. Perkins.

—So it comes to this, said the rat slowly: the whole world believes in peace and plenty and in happiness. . . . They all believe in it as a plan, but they can't put it into operation because they can't agree who is the author?

—They say they believe in it.

—Ah, said the rat. Do you? Mr. Perkins nodded. And so do I, went on the rat. And can *we* agree not to fight?

—As far as I'm concerned, yes, said Mr. Perkins. . . . Ssh!

There was a faint whispering outside the barn. The rat cocked an ear. I know who that is, he said. Two humans—a man and a girl. I've heard them before. Mating season, I think. Let's listen. . . .

The two pattered to the big door and sat down in the darkness. From outside came the whispered voices.

—If we have a baby, dear . . . I'd want it to be like you. *No . . . like you.* Well, like both of us, then. *I bet you'd make a wonderful daddy. But, John, we'll have to wait.* Till I get a better job. Yes. I want our youngster to have a proper chance in the world. . . . *Yes. No wars for him.* Let's hope not. *Oh, darling.* . . .

—Come away, said Mr. Perkins. They went back into the moonlight and sat a moment in silence. Why is it, said the rat, slowly, that they always say they want the next generation to be happy?

—I admire their unselfishness, said Mr. Perkins, quietly. Yes, said the rat, but it's so easy to be unselfish about to-morrow. They

ought to be demanding this happiness for themselves, now—then they might be sure their children would get it.

—I agree, said Mr. Perkins, sleepily, putting his head down between his paws.

—And there's another thing, said the rat. About this question of . . . I say. He came a little closer to Mr. Perkins: Bless me, he's asleep!

* * *

It was early evening in the offices of the *Daily Monitor*. All day long, as it had been for nearly a month, the yapping of multitudinous dogs had echoed down the corridors . . . the yapping of dogs brought by anxious owners—and some who were not their owners—in the hope of receiving Lord Flushwater's £500.

There were dogs that could stand on two legs (a loathsome trick), dogs that could open doors, dogs that could stretch out stiffly on the command "die", dogs that could take a penny to the shop and bring home the right daily paper, dogs that were said to sing because they made strange moaning noises when the piano was played, dogs that could balance sugar on their noses, dogs that could wear paper hats and hold a pipe in their mouths, dogs that could walk on their front paws only—dogs, in short, that had been degraded out of every semblance of canine dignity by so-called animal-lovers.

But there were no dogs that could write. One or two had been "trained" to make rough scrawls on a piece of paper after much effort, prompting, offers of rewards and threats. But not one that could write.

It was evening. The lights were on and the black-out curtains drawn in Christmas Zipp's sanctum, and he was dealing with the last dog-owner of the day, a horsey-looking woman with a definite manner and a large fur coat.

On a leather chair, but carefully separated from the cold seat by a cushion—Zipp's own cushion—sat a revolting Pekingese with a running nose, an asthmatic wheeze and a little pink tongue that flicked in and out like the tongue of a snake.

—But . . . does he *write*? asked the weary Zipp for the two hundredth time.

—Oh, come now, said the lady, with heavy playfulness. We understand one another better than that, don't we? I'm a friend of Lord Flushwater—well, of his wife. I know this newspaper game.

—I don't understand you, madam.

—Now, now, now! Lord Flushwater wants a little doggie to write his articles. And you don't suppose a dog can write articles, do you now? But Puggie here is a very intelligent dog . . . he understands everything I say, don't you, Puggie? There—look at him smiling! Oh, he'll keep our little secret, Mr. Zipp! You let Puggie write for you . . . it doesn't matter who really does the articles or what you say, except that you mustn't say anything nice about pussies because he hates them, don't you, darling? But otherwise—anything else you like. He won't breathe a single word. . . .

—But I do assure you Mrs. van Polze. . . .

—Louise . . . Lady Flushwater always calls me Louise. . . .

—I do assure you that we really, sincerely, do want a dog that can write. . . .

—Mr. . . . what's your name? . . . Zipp. H'm, not English, then? Mr. Zipp . . . must we prolong this comedy?

—Madam . . . ?

—I quite appreciate Lord Flushwater's idea. I think it's brilliant. Our doggies are being forgotten in this war, and what they think and what they stand for. But you must find some dog-owner you can trust in this little—"stunt," I think you newspaper men call it, don't you? Ha, ha! Well, now, who better than I? As I've told you, I know Lady Flushwater very well. . . . I'm a breeder of dogs—you have my address there: "China Dog Kennels, Skipton." And, Mr. Zipp . . . here the lady leaned forward and breathed heavily. I'm a very, very discreet person. Well, now . . . what about the contract?

—Contract?

—Ah, Puggie trusts me to look after his interests. I must be manager and run all his financial affairs. . . . Should we say, twenty pounds a week—and his board, of course?

—Madam, I'm afraid it's no use prolonging this interview. I regret, I have specific orders from His Lordship to try to find this dog which has been seen to write . . . at all costs. We may well go

beyond our offer of £500. But we cannot agree to . . . to . . . impersonate this animal.

—I see. I see what it is. You have a nominee of your own. . . . Don't contradict me! I shall go straight to Lady Flushwater and we shall put the case before her husband. . . . Good night. Come along, Puggie darling; don't sit on that horrid man's cushion. Let Mumsie carry you. There. . . .

—Allow me . . .

—I can open the door myself, thank you.

The lady swept out, accompanied by Puggie's shrill yapping.

Zipp lay back in his chair and wiped his brow. Being editor for Lord Flushwater was not all sunshine and the Savoy. Later that evening His Lordship himself came on the phone.

—Sorry, Chief . . . no luck again.

—Well, keep it up, Zipp. Keep it up. Say what you been doing to Mrs. van Polze? Zipp told him. H'm, said Lord Flushwater appreciatively, she's got something there. Cute idea. . . .

—D'you think we might use her dog? asked Zipp, half hoping.

—Eh? No, no. It's dishonest, Zipp . . . honesty's the best policy. Stick to the Bible. Besides, added Lord Flushwater, thoughtfully, suppose we do use her dog, Zipp, you never know . . . the right one might turn up.

* * *

And where was Mr. Perkins? Well, Mr. Perkins was in heaven—or as near it as he ever supposed he would get. He had remembered one thing that Lord Flushwater had forgotten—soldiers seldom know what is in the newspapers.

So Mr. Perkins, emerging from a field on to the main road where a convoy was resting, promptly ingratiated himself with the Army, got a lift without any difficulty, and finally found himself at Weybridge, in Surrey. There he left them and ambled up the towpath of a pleasant stream to think things over.

It was a bright but cold January day. He wandered along the left bank of the stream, he passed the little Chinese bridge that spans it, just off the main road, and then the sound of voices made him turn.

On the opposite side, in a large garden that ran down to the water from a big house, about a dozen children were playing. Mr. Perkins judged they would be between the ages of five and seven.

A group of them stood on the bank around a little boy who was crying, as all little boys can cry when they really want to, very lustily indeed. Mr. Perkins sought the cause of this, following the pointing fingers of the other children.

There, in midstream and rocking on its tiny ripples, was a toy boat, a poor little thing of unpainted wood and roughly hewn, probably by the youngster himself.

Mr. Perkins knew what it felt like to lose something so much your very own. After all, remember, he had lost his own body. He jumped down the bank and pushed a paw in the water.

—Ugh! said Mr. Perkins, pulling it out again hastily.

But the little boy was yelling more lustily than ever. The other children were trying in vain to comfort him. And the boat was drifting further and further away.

—Aw, dam' it! growled Mr. Perkins and plunged into the icy water. After the first sharp shock he felt suddenly hot and on top of his form. He had never swum before (not as a dog, that is) but he found no difficulty in keeping afloat. Mr. Perkins wuffed happily and set nose and rudder in the direction of the waterlogged craft.

—Oo! Look at the dog!

—Look, Jackie . . . he's going to bring it for you!

The howls ceased as if by magic. Mr. Perkins had reached the boat now . . . he got his jaws round it, gave his head a jerk to the right, his stumpy tail a woosh to the left, and made for the shore where the children were standing.

Thin little arms and tiny, grubby hands, reached down, gripped Mr. Perkins' forepaws and jerked him to the bank.

Mr. Perkins put down the boat at Jackie's feet, shook himself to the accompaniment of squeals of delight, sat down, put his head on one side, hung out his tongue, panted and said—wuff.

Jackie picked up his pitiful little toy, hugged it and patted Mr. Perkins' wet head timidly. Mr. Perkins licked his hand.

The conquest was complete. Jackie stuck an exploratory hand down to the uttermost depths of his trouser pocket and drew out a

grimy piece of paper. Unwrapping it with difficulty, he revealed a piece of toffee. He held this out to Mr. Perkins.

The toffee dropped, there was a snap of jaws, a brief swallow. . . . Jolly good, said Mr. Perkins.

—What'll we do with him? asked a little girl. Matron won't have dogs or cats.

—I'm going to keep him, said Jackie, if he'll stay. *He could play Indians with us. Or be a wolf in the desert! But she won't let us.* Don't tell her, said Jackie. Promise. *All right—if we can play with him.* 'Course. . . . *He could live in the wigwam and we could bring him food. . . .* Come on. I say, what'll we call him? *Cynthia's good at names. What shall we call him, Cynthia?*

Cynthia pondered. Well, she said at last, he saved Jackie's boat, didn't he? Let's call him Skipper.

—Yes . . . yes. There was general agreement. Come on, Skipper! Look, he knows it already!

Mr. Perkins pranced around the children, accepted at last as an equal, a friend, with no condescension and no obligations—except a share in the obligation of hiding his existence from that strange adult world which said, "No Dogs Here".

They all went along, weaving their way among a huge clump of rhododendron bushes. In the middle of this, under the largest bush of all, was a space like a tent. An old mackintosh had been woven among the branches to keep out rain, a worn tab rug which the housekeeper had thrown out, lay on the ground.

There were a few tattered, twopenny adventure books, a broken box of crayons, a few pages torn from exercise books, on which drawings of ships had been made, and a bow, made from an elder branch and a length of thick string.

This was the wigwam . . . and a world in itself, a world without frontiers.

It was the Arizona desert, a dense and ogre-haunted forest, a castle or a dungeon, an ice-floe, a palace or a woodcutter's hut; it housed princes or witches or fairies or goblins, it was Aladdin's cave or a grotto under the sea, it was the deck of a proud galleon or it was a tiny raft tossing in an Atlantic gale; buccaneers hid their brass-bound boxes of doubloons and guineas beneath its floor and if you put your ear to the ground you could hear the gnomes tapping at their anvils deep down below.

It was a world. It was *the* world. And it belonged entirely to a dozen poor children in an orphanage. Yet they gave it freely to a friend, with no withholdings and with no conditions . . . and the friend was Mr. Perkins.

From that day the wigwam was his home. When the bell rang for meals or for lessons he went to its shelter. When the children stole back again he was there to answer their whispers with a subdued bark and to accept the food which they took it in turns to hide. When they were away he wandered through the neighbouring gardens into the town—but always he was back in time to greet them.

For the journeys that Mr. Perkins made with the children were real journeys.

—We're in the desert in Australia, Jackie would say. And, at once, they were in Australia, lost in an endless desert under a blazing sun. . . .

Mr. Perkins was a jackal. Mr. Perkins was a seal. Mr. Perkins was an ox, a pack-mule, a lion, a tiger, a baboon, an octopus in an under-sea cavern, and once . . . by a supreme effort of imagination . . . he became an albatross for a short spell.

Towards all high endeavour and all tribulations he walked in faith that, through believing in the end, all trials could be borne, all evils endured and all things achieved.

Mr. Perkins was living the story he had never thought to write, the only story that is worth the telling . . . the eternal story of departure in hope, voyage in courage and achievement in faith. Mr. Perkins had become a child again.

It was one day in February that the Thing happened. It was evening and the children should have been in bed. Mr. Perkins was dozing in the wigwam when he heard footsteps and the branches rustled.

—Grr-r! said Mr. Perkins, the hair rising round his neck.—Sh-h! Skipper. It's me . . . whispered Jackie.

He pushed through the branches into the wigwam, dropped on the ground and flung his arms around Mr. Perkins, burying his face in his fur and crying scalding tears.

Mr. Perkins growled comfortingly and licked his ear.

—They're going to send me away, sobbed Jackie. Matron says so . . . she doesn't like me . . . she says I'm bad. She said . . . she

said . . . I was . . . a . . . a . . . disgrace because I couldn't do my sums . . . and I can't . . . I can't . . . they all get muddled up. . . .

—There, there, mumbled Mr. Perkins.

—I don't want to do . . . I don't want to leave you. . . . I don't want to leave you, Skipper. I'm not bad, am I?

—Of course not, son, said Mr. Perkins comfortingly.

—I do try, sobbed Jackie. I try to do them . . . but I get all wrong, somehow. . . .

—Never mind, said Mr. Perkins. I'll help you. . . .

—Will you . . . really?

—Of course I will, said Mr. Perkins. And then it dawned on him. Suddenly, blindingly. The boy had understood what he said.

—Do you know what I'm saying? queried Mr. Perkins, rather unnecessarily.

—Y-yes, Skipper. Always . . . oh, I don't want to leave you. Not ever, Skipper . . . you're my magic dog . . . you will help me, won't you?

—'Course I will, repeated Mr. Perkins, mechanically. Then: How did you get out?

—From the window on to the pantry roof—like the boys do at Greyfriars.

—Well, just you go back now, admonished Mr. Perkins. We'll look into these sums to-morrow. Don't worry, I'll put you right. She won't send you away. . . . I . . . I'd bite her ankles.

—Yes, you would, wouldn't you, Skipper?

—I would. Now . . . back to bed.

—Yes. Please don't you be cross with me. . . .

—I won't. Now—off you go.

Alone, Mr. Perkins lay and thought. And at last the truth came to him. It is not that children do not understand us, but we don't understand them.

Mr. Perkins put his head between his paws and slept peacefully.

* * *

The weeks passed and spring came, illuminating the black branches with gold and green, and still Mr. Perkins stayed in the

wigwam, telling the children new stories of adventure to enact, sometimes writing, laboriously, a synopsis while they were at lessons.

One day Mr. Perkins and the children were busy working out a new plot when they heard voices.

—Ssh! said Jackie. It's Matron.

—She never comes down this end of the garden!

—Keep quiet.

—There's someone with her. . . . Listen!

There were three voices. The Matron's was easily recognizable, but . . . Who are the others? asked Cynthia.

—One's Miss McCann. . . .

—Eh? said Mr. Perkins, forgetting to lower his voice, who did you say?

—Ssh, Skipper. Miss McCann . . . she's an actress. Matron says the house belongs to her . . . she says she's sort of our mother. . . . Cynthia chimed in: She's ever so pretty.

Kitty McCann! Mr. Perkins felt his fur rising.

Kitty McCann's retirement to the country had caused Lord Flushwater to fire him. Then there had been the accident . . . then the meeting with Hermann the dachshund . . . the chasing of Lord Flushwater from church (Mr. Perkins grinned at the thought), his hopeless love of Miss Leila Honeybrooke . . . his kidnapping by the lorry drivers . . . the affair in the café . . . his death sentence in court . . . the escape . . . and then: peace. And now here was this spectre from the horrid past.

Mr. Perkins shuddered. It needed only the presence of Lord Flushwater to make him thoroughly miserable.

The voices were nearer.

—I always think one should do what one can to help others less fortunate, don't you? trilled Miss McCann.

—Miss McCann is a real mother to the children, said the Matron. They all love her.

—Y'can't do better than follow the Good Book, rasped a familiar voice. Mr. Perkins closed his eyes in agony. The voice went on: Inasmuch as y'do it unno the least of these y'do it also unno me.

—Wonderful, breathed Miss McCann ecstatically. I thought all you newspaper-men were so *cynical*. My husband said you would understand . . . and I said, she pouted prettily, that a big, wealthy

man like you wouldn't understand what it is to be poor like the twenty children we have here. It *is* twenty, isn't it? she asked the Matron.

—Twelve, said Matron.

—Twelve, I meant, said Miss McCann.

—Understand? said Lord Flushwater. Why, I was brought up in poverty. . . . I've not forgotten. If I've got on it's all due to the Good Book. Gives a man guts to fight. Y'know what it says: "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". Well, I've lost most o' my teeth—but I reckon I've poked a good few eyes out in my time!

Miss McCann stifled a yawn. So you will help my little venture, won't you? she asked.

—Eh? I will, I will. Just as soon as your husband and me get this deal fixed. Say, now . . . you just persuade him to sell those shares and we'll see what we can do. . . .

Just then Jackie sneezed.

—What was that?

—The children! said Matron. They must be hiding. Come out, children . . . come out . . . Miss McCann's here. They are darlings, aren't they? she added, pursing her lips and shaking her head grimly at Miss McCann.

—Come along, dears, cooed Miss McCann. . . .

—Oh, heck, said Jackie, scrambling through the bushes, still with the exercise book in his hand. The others followed, to stand silent and downcast in a tight circle before their fairy godmother.

—Aren't they sweet! said Miss McCann.

—Jackie, look at your hands. Aren't you ashamed to be like that? It was Matron. She went on: And what's that . . . give me that book. Where did you get it? Oh, you wicked boy . . . stolen from my desk! . . .

Jackie began to blubber. It was too much for Mr. Perkins. He shot out of the trees with a growl and bared his teeth at the Matron, who jumped back with a squeal.

—That dog! said Lord Flushwater. . . . I know that dog!

—Skipper . . . don't, please! said Jackie.

Mr. Perkins subsided. He sat down, though an occasional rumble of wrath escaped him. There was a silence.

—Well, now, began Lord Flushwater, jovially, but with a look of mistrust at Mr. Perkins. Boys will be boys, eh? Remember I was

just the same. Let's have a look at his book, Matron. A story, eh?

Words of one syllable attracted His Lordship. He could just about understand them. He began to read the story. . . .

—Not bad, son. Say, we might make a reporter out of him, y'know, one o' these days. Did you write all this, son?

—No, sir, said Jackie, the words surprised out of him. Skipper wrote most of it. . . .

—Skipper?

—Him, said Jackie, pointing at Mr. Perkins. He's clever!

—You wicked boy, telling such untruths! began Matron. . . .

—But you did, didn't you? said Jackie, tears returning as he turned to Mr. Perkins.

—'Course I did, barked Mr. Perkins.

—I'm afraid he's incorrigible, Your Lordship, said Matron. But Lord Flushwater was looking hard at Jackie. . . .

—Say, sonny, where did this dog come from?

—He just came to us one day, sir, said Jackie. He swam across the river and we . . . he . . . he came to live here. Lord Flushwater was becoming excited. Here, son, he said, give him this pencil and the book. Ask him to write something.

Miss McCann looked at the Matron. The Matron opened her mouth like a cod. But Lord Flushwater was oblivious to everything. Jackie laid the book in front of Mr. Perkins and put the pencil on it.

—Go on, Skipper . . . show him you can write, he said.

Mr. Perkins thought quickly. If he did, this might mean a new career opening for him. But it would mean leaving the children. He gripped the pencil in his teeth. . . .

—D'y'know what? said Lord Flushwater turning excitedly to the two women. If this youngster's right he's got the dog we been looking for for months. The writing dog! And the *Daily Monitor* will pay him five hundred pounds!

The women gasped. Jackie said Ooh!

Mr. Perkins made up his mind. He bent his head and began to write. Gosh! said Lord Flushwater.

—Jackie always was our brightest scholar, said Matron, with a tready smile. Mr. Perkins grunted and went on. Then he stood back. Jackie handed the paper to Lord Flushwater.

—"O.K. Let's fix a contract," he read. Jubilation overcame his amazement. I got the car outside. C'mon, Dog, let's go. . . . He was turning, forgetful of everyone else, to leave the garden when Mr. Perkins barked again: Jackie . . . give me the pencil and the book again.

—What's that? said Lord Flushwater, halting.

—Please can Skipper have the paper and pencil? asked Jackie. Lord Flushwater handed them over and Mr. Perkins wrote again. . . .

—"Jackie must come too . . ."

—Sure, said Lord Flushwater. Sure. . . .

With the children following, chattering excitedly, and Miss McCann and the Matron exchanging bewildered whispers, they made their way to Lord Flushwater's Rolls-Royce.

—Fleet Street, and make it snappy, barked Lord Flushwater. Hop in, sonny. . . .

—This dog, Your Lordship . . . said the chauffeur. Shall I take it in front?

—The hell you will! snarled Mr. Perkins. He took one leap, landed on the back seat and snuggled down in Lord Flushwater's travelling rug. Lord Flushwater looked at the chauffeur and jerked a thumb in the direction of Mr. Perkins.

—He's the boss, he said. Then, under his breath: 'til we've got the contract signed.

* * *

That afternoon the strangest conference that Fleet Street has ever known was held in the office of Christmas Zipp.

At one side of the polished mahogany table sat Lord Flushwater. At another was the editor. Opposite Lord Flushwater sat the bewildered Jackie. And opposite Zipp, Mr. Perkins sat on his haunches on the leather seat of a high stool borrowed from the nearby milk-bar.

—Now, son, said Lord Flushwater, let's begin. We're going to give you five hundred pounds for finding this wonderful dog. All you got to do is . . . Mr. Perkins barked.

—What's he say?

—Please, sir, said Jackie, he says I'm to leave the business to him. Mr. Perkins shot a stream of barks across the table.

—Sir, Skipper says he'd like a typewriter.

Lord Flushwater sighed. Evidently this was not going to be easy. A typewriter was brought and Mr. Perkins made a few practice runs over the keys. Zipp came and stood behind him, reading over his muzzle. Carefully, though with a few unavoidable mistakes, Mr. Perkins pawed out his wishes.

—1. Jackie mustg be providedfor.

—What's that mean? asked Lord Flushwater. The typing began again. . . .

—Pay him £500; money to be admjnistred by a reputabl firm of sollicitors. *Okay, okay*, said Lord Flushwater hastily.

Mr. Perkins calmly went on typing: Solicitors must arange aboutg his scholingh. . . . *Okay. Now let's get on to fixing up about the writing . . . er . . . Mister Dog.*

Mr. Perkins continued typing: I wantan ofice in the bildingj. *Sure, sure.* With a typewriter . . . and three meals a day brouhgt in. *Sure, we can arrange that.* . . . Lord Flushwater was pleased.

—And, typed Mr. Perkins as the goggle-eyed Zipp read out his words, I'll sleepin myroom. . . . *That's grand, we'll fix it right away.*

—As to money, continued Mr. Perkins, tapping away busily, i wanta 2year conntractg at £2,000a yer. . . .

—It's worth it, said Lord Flushwater, as Zipp shot him a swift glance. We'll have that drawn up at once. . . .

—He's not finished yet, said Zipp.

Mr. Perkins continued:—i want the money in advancef. *Oh, come, now!* No moneyg;;; nowriting, typed Mr. Perkins definitely. *Oh, all right. Now, how about a story to-night, eh?*

—OHNO, typed Mr. Perkins, not til weve got it alll fixed up leggaly. *Okay*, groaned Lord Flushwater.

—Oh an dbytheway, tapped out Mr. Perkins, as an afterthought, give jackie seven andsixpence.

—What for? said Lord Flushwater, as he handed over the money.

—Formy licence, Mr. Perkins typed.

After a long and wearing interview with a firm of solicitors . . . wearing, that is, for the solicitors . . . Mr. Perkins had everything fixed.

He refused to write a word until the matter was to his satisfaction and Lord Flushwater had to give way. A trust was arranged for Jackie, part of the money to go to the orphanage until his education there was completed; for he could not bear the thought of leaving the other children. The rest was to take him on to another school later.

Mr. Perkins himself had few wants . . . his food and a corner of a warm room to sleep in, that was all: and because of his small needs he had the whip-paw of Lord Flushwater in the deal.

So it was that at last the *Daily Monitor* came out with the strangest story it had ever published. It nearly pushed the peace conference off the front page, while the setting-up of a democratic government of ex-Fascist officers in two of the smaller European states was relegated to the back of the paper.

WRITING DOG WRITES FOR *MONITOR*

Biggest Scoop of All Time

PEER FINDS MYSTERY MONGREL

screamed the headlines, while subsidiary decks spoke of WIGWAM WONDER-TALES FOR ORPHANS and exhorted readers Not to Miss the First Thrilling Instalment To-morrow.

Mr. Perkins was a terrific success. The circulation of the *Monitor* soared . . . and there was nothing Lord Flushwater's competitors could do about it. Rival editors who dared to suggest that things were not above-board were invited to witness Mr. Perkins actually at work. They went away like men in a dream, and the Press Club consumption of whisky rose to astronomical figures.

Mr. Perkins wrote of his adventures, of his experiences, of what a dog's life really meant . . . and the first few weeks passed happily.

Hollywood made a munificent offer. Mr. Perkins accepted, so long as the picture was made in England, and paid all the money into Jackie's account.

It was the usual kind of picture: Boy meets Girl, Girl and Boy are estranged, Girl's Dog finds Girl's Wicked Mother reading letters she has intercepted and writes to Boy who Makes Desperate

Dash from Desert and arrives at Church in time to stop Marriage of Convenience.

Mr. Perkins wuffed his way through five reels and happily paid £5,000 into the bank.

Lord Flushwater was on the phone to Zipp.

—How's he going?

—Fine, Chief. Best stunt we ever did. Marvellous the way you found him.

—Faith in the Lord, Zipp. Faith in the Lord. Seek and ye shall find. . . . Unto him that hath shall be given. Stick to religion, Zipp. It'll never let you down. *No, Chief. I mean, yes, Chief.* Say, Zipp. This Dog's had a good run now. How about making him useful? What about getting him to do to-night's article on controls? *D'you think it'll have weight, Chief?* My articles always have weight. Don't forget that, Zipp. Incontrovertible arguments . . . but we could do with a bit o' glammer. That's what the public want. Let the dog write 'em up. You give him the facts. *Yes, Chief. But do you think he'll do it?*

—Why shouldn't he? We're paying him well, aren't we? *Yes, Chief. Well then! Right, Chief. Good-bye.*

But Lord Flushwater, as was his habit, had already rung off. The instruction came to Mr. Perkins in a memo from the editor.

His Lordship wants you write 500 words to-night on removal war-time controls on industry. Usual lines: war-time growth bureaucracy and inefficiency, stranglehold red-tape on initiative, businessman better idea needs of country than office dictators Civil Service. Good angle: Dog goes offices, factories as unseen observer, notes muddle due Government Departments' interference, interviews working men who agree trade stagnant until free hand restored initiative employers.

Mr. Perkins received the note and studied it. Then he carefully looked through Jackie's bank account and, satisfied, sat down to reply. He typed with one nail of one paw . . . and he wasted many sheets of paper before he got his answer letter-perfect:

Dog to Editor. Your memo. received. Will write article pointing out war-time bureaucracy imposed and increased by Flushwater's party with avowed object winning war which now done. If bureaucracy necessary greatest struggle why unnecessary now? Will point out Flushwater ready

to appeal government for more bureaucracy and imposition new burdens on public when private business fails to make profits and needs subsidies; but where national interest imposes limits on private buccaneering Flushwater gang scream for lifting controls. P.S. Freedom of Press should be freedom to tell truth not to restrict it. Tell Flushwater to read Bible.

Mr. Perkins looked at the note with relish, sent it in to the editor and followed it an hour later with his article. There was no reply from Zipp. . . . He was on the phone to His Lordship. *Dog's getting awkward, Chief*, said Zipp, mournfully. *Whole article dead against policy. Well, leave it out, Zipp. But suppose the dog goes over to some other paper? They'll not print him either, if he writes against policy. That dog's an unjust steward, Zipp. That's what he is. A what, Chief? Read your Bible, Zipp.*

His Lordship rang off. Next morning, sure enough, Mr. Perkins opened the *Daily Monitor* to find that the Writing Dog, for whose articles the public clamoured, had nothing in its pages.

The Little Feller could have what he wanted . . . up to a point. Mr. Perkins, the only writing dog in the world, could write what he liked . . . up to a point.

However, Mr. Perkins had saved his biggest story for such an occasion as this—when Lord Flushwater, as would inevitably happen, got bored with the novelty of his achievements.

He sat down and wrote out the whole story of his death and how he came to be alive as a dog and he headed it: I AM SAMUEL PERKINS. THE DEAD LIVE ON. . . .

Next morning it was not in the paper. Nothing appeared but a brief announcement on Page Three saying that the *Daily Monitor* Dog Contributor was on holiday.

Lord Flushwater was in conference about the article with the Bishop of Branchester.

—Pure spiritualism, said the Bishop, gravely. Are you sure that that man Swaffer isn't behind it?

—No. It's genuine enough, said His Lordship, heavily. I've seen the dog write with my own eyes.

—Then it is the work of devils, aiming to undermine the authority of Holy Church, said the Bishop.

—I don't get that, said Lord Flushwater, a little puzzled (he had a simple and direct mind). Here's a dog that writes. It writes like a

yuman being, it thinks like a yuman being. See? Then it ups and it says that it is a yuman being really; that a man's soul got into a dog's body. See? That seems kind of reasonable, if y'follow me.

—I don't believe it, said the Bishop, definitely.

—But you believe in devils? asked Lord Flushwater.

—Most certainly.

—Y'd rather believe in devils than in yuman souls? asked Lord Flushwater.

—No, said the Bishop, irritably, but anything that militates against the authority of the Church must be the work of devils.

—You shoulda been a politician, said His Lordship. That's the kind o' simple, downright argument I find most effective myself. Still . . . it's a helluva good story.

—You're surely not going to print it?

—Well, I was thinking that way. . . . Interesting to see what'd happen.

The Bishop looked at him. I can tell you what would happen, he said. If that story were believed the whole authority of Church and Government, of this free, democratic Government, would be destroyed. Let us be frank: if the people honestly and sincerely believed that life everlasting lay before them, that personality and memory endured, in whatever form, how could we . . . how could you . . . ever exercise authority over them?

—*H'm.*

—A man must eat, and to eat he must work . . . and both admission to the places of labour and the rewards for that labour are in your hands and the hands of those who rule. In return for the giving of those boons you demand obedience.

—I'm all for the Little Feller, said His Lordship truculently.

—So long as he remains little! The Bishop wagged an admonitory finger. Suppose he became as big as you?

—There isn't room for two as big as me, said His Lordship, bridling. Somebody's got to be boss . . . I mean, somebody's got to take the responsibility of direction, for the good of all. Too many cooks spoil the broth.

—And do you want your broth spoiled?

—I'd like to meet the man who could do it!

—Then I advise you to think not once, twice, but three times

before publishing that article. If you once convince the common man that life everlasting really lies before him you will never hold him down. What weapon will you have? If he does not want your laws, if he does not want your terms, he need no longer fear to open the gates that shut off life from the territory of death. For those gates will no longer open into nothingness and the terror of dissolution but into hope and life abounding. What might he not become? A dog, perhaps . . . a blade of grass . . . a tree . . . Why not? If one, why not the other? And can you coerce a tree?

—I've never tried, said Lord Flushwater, rubbing his left ear. This is getting me out o' my depth. Look here, do *you* believe in this life-everlasting business?

The Bishop looked at him. That is a leading question, he said at last, but, since we are being frank with one another, I may as well confess that I find it a most terrifying thought.

Lord Flushwater looked relieved. So do I, he said. Let's be happy while we can, is my motto.

—It would be unwise to tell even that thought to the public, said the Bishop. They might also demand it now instead of postponing it to some dim and undefined future state.

—Seems we're in the soup whatever we say.

—Then say nothing. There must be plenty of other matters to distract the mind of the public, surely?

—Gosh! said His Lordship, in the fervour of a new idea, you're right. We'll drop the darn' dog and . . . and . . . we'll run a big campaign against the Co-op!

—Good, said the Bishop. And . . . by the way . . . you won't forget the national day of prayer, will you?

—Not on your life, said His Lordship. That's all fixed up . . . we're campaigning for special parades, flags out, massed bands, Albert Hall service, two minutes' silence of remembrance and . . . and . . . all the rest of it, he added weakly.

—Thank you. I cannot tell you how heartening it is to us to have such marvellous support from a man whose voice reaches into the homes of the people.

—Well, you see, answered Lord Flushwater, gratified, I'm a deeply religious man.

That evening His Lordship got on the phone to Zipp.

—Sack the dog, he said. He's through: washed up. I think there's something phony about him. . . . But let's have no trouble—see if you can get him out quietly. . . .

Zipp's voice came back over the wire, fresh, relieved, almost youthful.

—There'll be no trouble, Chief. He's sacked himself.

—What? Walked out on me? The dirty dog!

—Yes, he's gone, Chief. Left a sort of farewell note. I'll send it round.

In his study that evening Lord Flushwater read the last words he was ever to read from the paws of Mr. Perkins. The message was not very well typed. Mr. Perkins had evidently been labouring under some emotion. But the meaning was clear.

When i was a man (ran the note) my name was SAmuel Perkkins and I worked on the Daily MOnitro. You dismissed me for a follish error, as you had every right to do, but the expereince made me think. I realized that you held the power to stop my pen from writing anythinb that might be againsy your wishes and that the socalled FReedom of the Press does not exist—but only the licence of the proprietors of the press.

When i became a Dog and moved among the People I found among them kindness and friendship and also a kind of despairing hope that was to me a terifying revvelation ofthe depths to whicch humanity has sunk;. For they were hoping for peace and a decent life—not for themselves, for they had resigned themsevles to hardship untill DEath—but for their children. Peace came, but even before it came I watched you and menlike you, jockeying for positions of control ovver the lives of others throughout the world—and I found the People looking on without understanding, for there was none to tell them what was hapening, since you and those like you withhold from them the most vital comodity in the world today . . . The TRUTH.

Thanks to you the People have lost the power to think and to strive, to put things right now. They only hope . . . and that with the experience of a dozen wars to prove that hope is vainn;.

This is the world you made and I wish you well of it—for I am leaving it. i am goingg to a new World where there are still high ideals, high endeavour, and not only hope, but faith.

Sgd: Samuel Perkins (Dog)

On the banks of a stream a boy and a dog sat together, gazing into the sunset of a chill spring evening.

. . . And so, said the Dog, after a pause, St. George found the dragon outside its cave. It was as big as a house and covered with shiny scales and it was lashing its tail and breathing fire and smoke out of its nose. And St. George thought to himself, "I am tired and weary and I have come a long way and it is a very fearsome dragon. Shall I rest a while before I attack it?" That's what he thought to himself. . . .

—And what did he do? asked the Boy.

—Well, then, he thought again. And he thought: "The Dragon has been lashing its tail all day and breathing fire and smoke. Perhaps it is as tired as I am. Perhaps it is more tired. But if I rest to-night the dragon may rest too, and be even stronger in the morning. No," he said to himself, "I will attack it now." And he did. . . .

—And did he kill it? asked the Boy.

—Of course he did, answered Mr. Perkins.

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